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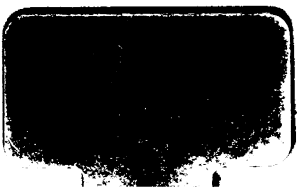

Lucia Richmond

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JUNE. Illustrated.

TWO ALIKE. Illustrated.

TWO ALIKE

"OH, MY GLORY, MARSE JOHN!" HE CRIED. "DEY AIN'T DERE!" (*page* 154)

TWO ALIKE

By EDITH BARNARD DELANO

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1918

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Published November 1918

TO

LOUISE MAYHEW PARSONS

(*Bobs or Bunny or just Louise?*)

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From drawings by Clara Elsen Peck

TWO ALIKE

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF SYBIL

THE hills were white. After the snowstorm of the day before, the morning had dawned glittering and clear. The village of South Wickham was getting ready for Christmas. From every kitchen chimney friendly plumes of smoke proclaimed that generous bakings and fryings were going on. The window of Mr. Ware's general store, only yesterday filled with shining, many-colored balls and dolls in cardboard boxes and strings of tinsel, was already denuded of everything save the wonderful electric train which endlessly wound its way through the little green tunnel and over the little gray bridge above the looking-glass river, and past the toy village in the right-hand corner and the farmhouse away over to the left, and back again past the little flagman

with his flag, and the semaphore that acted like a real one, and past and ever past the row of faces flattened against the window-pane and all the other faces crowding behind the small boys who had got there first. Already in many another window red-ribboned wreaths had blossomed with the suddenness of some strange plant that blooms but once a year. Already the little church was decorated with great ropes of ground-pine wound into garlands, and already the big pine tree for the Sunday-School festival lay in the snow behind the choir — with the effect of trying its best to remain hidden, as any self-respecting Christmas surprise should do!

Up on the hill behind the village there were parties of young people gathering last-minute evergreens, some of them wandering off in couples — as young people ever will — some remaining in jolly groups, some going apart on little quests of their own. Up to these others there came through the clear, still air the sound of more merry voices, and, pres-

ently, around a bend of the steeply ascending road which could scarcely now be traced through its blanket of snow, a long, flat wood-sled came in sight, drawn by two powerful horses.

"Who's ready for a lift?" a strong voice called.

The man driving the horses, walking along beside the sled with the reins in his hand, was the speaker.

Every year Mr. Cyrus Broddy, a friendly farmer from the valley beyond South Wickham, came up the hill with his enormous woodsled, and every year called out the same cheery greeting. Every year, that is, when there was snow enough for the sled, as of course there should be on every Christmas Eve. And if by unhappy circumstance there was no snow, then Farmer Broddy came in a hay wagon!

To-day, when the big horses pulled up the hill and came to a level place in the road and were permitted to stand still, the young people

came through the woods from all directions, to the number of fifteen or twenty, bearing their harvests of evergreen, cedar and spruce boughs, baskets of ground-pine, cone-laden boughs, anything and everything that could be used for Christmas decorations and that could be gathered in those bountiful woods.

A girl in a red Alpine cap — a first cousin of a cap to a Scottish tam-o'-shanter — was seated on the sled, her lap full of evergreens; and as the others drew near she waved to them, laughing.

"Bobs! You wretch! You always make the first goal!" one of the girls cried.

And another called, "Why, Bobs Crawford! I left you 'way up on the mountain! How did you get on that sled?"

Farmer Broddy laughed. "Bobby and me has a rondayvoo down by the first bend every Christmas, don't we, Bobby?"

But Roberta Crawford's brother Hallam, aged fifteen, had something to say to that. "You need n't think you're the only one she

makes eyes at, Mr. Broddy," said he. "Bobs wheedles around everybody, when she wants anything!"

The others all laughed, for Hallam spoke with deep bitterness.

"I reckon you think Bobby wants to drive my bays going home, don't you, son?" Mr. Broddy asked.

"She did it last year and the year before," Hallam retorted gloomily.

Bobs smiled on her brother and the farmer and all the others alike. "Boys are so silly," she said. "I do think Mr. Broddy was just lovely to let me drive home last year — but, of course, I would n't expect to do it every year!" Then she added, in an aside to one of the other girls who had taken a place beside her on the sled, "One really does grow up, eventually!"

"Of course!" the other returned. "Oh, it's great fun to drive — but, after all, when one is grown —"

"Precisely," said Bobs, and the two drew

a little closer together to make room for the others.

When the horses, with Hallam leaning back against the reins, were at last headed down the hill, and the sled was crunching comfortably along the snowy road, some one leaned across the intervening space and called out, —

"Is Sybil coming for Christmas, Bobs?"

Roberta's face lighted. "Oh, yes! And grandfather, too! It would n't be Christmas without them!"

The girl at her side, who had only been living in South Wickham for a year, asked, "Is that your sister who lives in Maryland, Bobs?"

"Well, she is and she is n't our sister!" replied Bobs. "She was our sister until just a year or two ago, and then she was n't. Like grandfather. First we did n't even know there was such a person, and then he was our great-uncle, and now we call him grandfather!" Then, at the other's mystified look she added, "It's the most romantic story — "

"Oh, tell it!" some one cried.

"Yes, do tell us about it, Bobs!"

"But you all know Sybil — you all know about it!"

"But I don't," the girl at her side reminded her. And the others still begged for the story.

"Well, it really is just terribly romantic," Bobs began. "I never shall forget, to the longest day I live, the thrill it gave me when I heard it first!"

"O-oh!" The exclamation came from several.

The girl beside Bobs said, "And to have it happen right in your own family!"

Bobs gave her an appreciative look. "Yes, I know! It was just like living in history, or a novel or something, the way kings and queens do, or — or — "

"Or in the movies!" some one supplied.

"Or in the movies!" Bobs nodded. "Of course, it was n't quite as thrilling as if we had been the heroine, ourselves! But then — "

Remarkable as this speech sounded, her

friends understood; for Roberta was a twin, and neither she nor her sister Abundance, familiarly known as "Bunny," ever spoke or thought of themselves as separate individuals. What concerned one must concern both; what happened to one must happen to both — everybody in South Wickham knew that!

"I think Sybil is a beautiful name," the girl at Bobs' side remarked, with a rapt expression. She enormously admired the Crawford twins, and there was none among the young people of the village who was not glad to be singled out for the attention of Bobs or Bunny.

"Sybil? Yes, I do, too! And that's really what began it," said Bobs. "In a way, of course! Because the story really began with Sybil's grandmother, and her name was Sybilla. Our Sybil was named after her. And her story really began with her grandmother. You see, Sybilla was very beautiful — Sybil looks just exactly like her, so she's beautiful, too — and she's awfully stunning, too, and wears the most beeeeeautiful clothes!"

Bobs now had the undivided attention of her audience, and went on.

"Well, once upon a time — and the time was when the Civil War began — there were two brothers, William Crockett and John Crockett. They lived in Maryland, on a perfectly enormous plantation called Montebello. And they were both in love with Sybilla Rutherford, who lived near there.

"The war came, and William went into the Confederate army, and his brother John stayed home. There was a reason why he stayed home — his mother made him swear never to fight on the side of the South. But nobody down there knew about it, and they all thought he was just a plain downright coward. His mother died, and he never told anybody what she had made him do, because he knew that then all the family and all their friends would not respect his mother's memory. So he just built a little house in the woods and went off to live by himself like a regular hermit, and not even Sybilla Rutherford nor

his own brother William would speak to him.

"After the war Sybilla married William Crockett, and they had a son, and when the son grew up he and his father had a perfectly dreadful quarrel, because the son wanted his father to make friends with his brother John, and William Crockett would n't. So the son went away from Montebello, and he got married, and our Sybil is his daughter. See? Well, Sybil's father and mother died and left her to our father and mother, and that was when she was very young, indeed, and not one of us except my oldest brother Donald ever dreeeeeamed that she was n't our really-truly sister. Her grandfather Crockett did n't even know that his son had left a little girl when he died. Sybil's father wanted it that way. He made our daddy promise not to tell unless the right moment came.

"I can remember to this day when the letter came from Colonel Crockett asking father to let one of us children visit him and his sister, Miss Sophia. He said he was an old man, and

lonesome, and wanted somebody who was young to come cheer him and Miss Sophia up. Of course Daddy let Sybil go, but even she did n't know it was her grandfather she was going to visit. She just thought it was just daddy's uncle.

"Well, every living soul on that plantation, and all the neighbors, and grandfather — only he was just Uncle Crockett, then — and *everybody* noticed how much Sybil looked like Colonel Crockett's wife that had been dead so many years. But nobody suspected anything queer, because everybody thought she was daddy's and Mother-dear's own child, like us, you see. They thought it was just an accidental resemblance. Like mine to Joan of Arc.

"But all the time the colonel kept getting fonder and fonder of Sybil, and she of him.

"The colonel gave Sybil a beautiful horse, and she used to ride around the country on him. One day she came on a little house in the woods, and she had heard about the hermit, so she stopped and talked or something, and

they got to be great friends; but the hermit warned her not to tell Colonel Crockett that she had met him, though Sybil did n't know why on earth she must n't. She did n't know he was the colonel's brother John, you see.

"Sybil had been at Montebello quite a long while — a whole summer and more — when one day she and another girl went out in a canoe. It's right on the Chesapeake, Montebello is. Both of the girls knew how to paddle, but a perfectly terrible thunderstorm came up, and they upset, and both of them fell in the water, and they would have been *drowned* if the hermit had n't seen them and rescued them!

"And by that time, you know, Colonel Crockett — Grandfather — thought there just was n't anybody in the world like Sybil, though he still thought she was only his grandniece. So when he realized that it was his brother John that had saved her from a watery grave, and when Daddy — who went down in a hurry because Sybil was awfully ill after her

experience in the water — when Daddy told who she really was, why — do you see? There she was, her own grandfather's grandchild, right there, named after her grandmother and looking just exactly like her, and all! And if she had n't almost got drowned it might *never* have come out, and Uncle John and Grandfather would never have made friends after over *fifty* years, and —

"Now, don't you think that's a romantic story?"

"Aw, pshaw!" Hallam said, from beside the sled. "Girls are always looking for romance! Silly!"

But the others ignored him.

"It's just thrilling!" said one.

"And does Sybil live there all the time?" the girl at Bobs' side asked.

"Of course! Because she's his granddaughter, you see, now that she is n't our own sister any longer!"

"And do they always come up for Christmas?"

"Well, there have n't been very many Christmases since it happened! Last year they all came, but this year only Sybil and Grandfather are coming."

The talk drifted on to other things; but presently the girl at Bobs' side, who had been examining her profile with great intentness, whispered, —

"You *do* look like Joan of Arc, Bobs!"

And Bobs turned and gave her a smile which thrilled her admirer's heart with ecstasy.

CHAPTER II

THE CRAWFORDS AT HOME

Down the white road and into the village street the long sled made its way.

"Well, sir, this is a real, old-fashioned, sure-enough Christmas Eve, now, is n't it?" Farmer Broddy asked of the world in general.

And in truth it was. Every roof was covered deep with snow. The boughs of the evergreens in people's front yards hung low under their snowy burdens. Sleigh-bells jangled merrily as the busy delivery wagons went on their mysterious errands. People waved to the sled with its joyous load, and as the big horses drew down the street the young people jumped off at the points nearest their own homes, calling to each other, and both calling and waving their thanks to Mr. Broddy.

At the farthest end of the village there was an old brown house set well back in a yard whose paling fence was decorated now with

little tufts of snow on every point and post, an old house with white eyebrows marked over every doorway and window, and even over the doctor's sign that proclaimed the house to be the abiding-place of the Crawford tribe. The village children were making merry with sleds and snowballs. Sammy Wilkerson, the one messenger boy of the town, was coming along the street toward the doctor's house, whistling. He stopped at the corner of the fence, to return the cannonade of some youngsters across the street. Finding the sport to his liking, he aimed at a white kitten that was picking its way toward the house.

The snowball was soft and the cat was agile, but Sammy had scarcely thrown the missile when a window was thrown open, and a voice spoke sharply.

Yet, for all its sharpness, it was a merry voice, and in spite of a big black smudge across the nose, the face beneath the little Dutch dust-cap, of a blue that matched the eyes, was most unmistakably pretty.

"Sammy Wilkerson! You Sammy!" cried Bunny Crawford. "Are n't you ashamed to hit that poor, inoffensive little cat?"

Sammy grinned. "Did n't hit it. Cat jumped. Say, I've got a telegram for you."

In a moment Bunny appeared at the door.

"It's from your brother out West," said Sammy. "Comin' home for Christmas, he is. Sybil ain't sent word yet what train she and her old man's comin' on."

"Sammy!" cried Bunny. "You dreadful boy! You know perfectly well you ought not to read people's telegrams and tell every one what's in them!"

"I don't tell every one. Miss Walker, she saw me coming up the street, and she says, 'I guess you've got another telegram for the doctor's folks, Sammy?' And I says, 'That's as may be.' And Miss Walker, she says, 'I guess they're all coming home for Christmas?' And I says, 'Well, if they are, they'll be in plain sight for every one to see.' Now, Bunny Crawford, do you call *that* telling?"

"I call it rude, inexpressibly rude," said Bunny. "And you must call me Miss Crawford, and my sister Miss Roberta; and the person you call 'Sybil' is Miss Crockett. Now, please just remember that."

When he was halfway to the gate, Sammy, grinning broadly, looked over his shoulder, and said:—

"Yes, Miss Crawford, I'll remember, Miss Crawford, and while you're about it, Miss Crawford, you can just call me 'General.'"

Abundance went back into the house and banged the door. "Oh, you may laugh, Mother-dear," she said to the smiling, gray-haired lady on the stairs, "but I do think Sammy Wilkerson ought to be taught politeness toward people who are grown up."

"So he should," said Mrs Crawford. "I am glad to have you show something of the spirit of reformers, my dear. I have just come from your bedroom — oh, my child! Such a state! Why not begin your reform there?"

"Too much to do downstairs, and in Sybil's

room, and Grandfather's! Sammy said the telegram was from Donald, Mother-dear."

Mrs. Crawford opened the yellow envelope. "It's wonderful how we get used to things," she said. "A few years ago a telegram would have brought all the household running, and the neighbors would have sent the children across to find out who was ill. Now Sybil has fallen into the way of sending telegrams as postscripts to her letters; and our engineer, Donald, uses them to such an extent that I scarcely see his handwriting once a fortnight. Why, this *is* from Donald! And, Bunny, see, it's from Chicago — he's coming home! It was sent from there last night! Oh" — her voice broke a little — "this is wonderful!"

"Another bed to fix!" cried Bunny. "Why does n't Bobs hurry? You'd think they were cutting down the forest."

"Hurry!" cried another young voice from the doorway — a voice astonishingly like Bunny's. "Hurry, indeed! Here you stay at home in a nice warm house, with nothing to

do except to dust a little bit and make up a bed or two, and send *us* out into the cold to chop down trees and hunt for ground-pine that's buried under two feet of snow! And you talk about hurry!"

Fire and flame, frost and rime, two roses just blown, were not more alike than Bunny and Bobs, as they chose to be called, in preference to their sedate names of Abundance and Roberta. There had been a time when Abundance fulfilled the promise of her name by being stouter than her twin; but now, at seventeen, except for slight differences of expression and for the color of their eyes, they were as much alike as they had been in those days of their childhood when they could be distinguished outside the family only by the pink or blue bows on their little bonnets.

Following Bobs through the doorway came a lad of fifteen, and a young man who eyed the world, kindly and seriously, through large, thick spectacles; they both carried huge bundles of evergreen.

"Dick," said Mrs. Crawford, "Roberta, dear, I have a message from Donald that he is coming home for Christmas."

"Oh, how perfectly, wonderfully gorgeous!" cried Bobs.

"What a surprise for Sybil!" cried Bunny.

"Great luck!" said Dick.

And Hallam, for once unreproved, cried, "Bully!" as he frisked gayly about the room.

"Well, you have only two hours before the colonel and Sybil arrive," Mrs. Crawford reminded them. "So hurry, all of you!"

They worked to such good effect that when they rushed to the door to welcome the three figures descending from the doctor's sleigh, every wreath was in place, every picture and mirror framed in green, and every Christmas "surprise" hidden — at least, as well as Christmas "surprises" usually are.

A tall, dark girl in beautiful furs had sprung from the sleigh before the runners had ceased crunching over the snow. Swift as was the rush of the twins, Sybil Crockett was

swifter. She met them halfway up the path, embraced them hastily, and dashed on to the doorway.

"Mother-dear! Mother-dear!" she cried.

Mrs. Crawford's arms held Sybil closely and warmly, and there were tears in her eyes as she returned the girl's kisses.

"My own big girl! My darling!" she cried. "I can never get used to your being away."

The twins, laughing and talking, had come up the path with a soldierly, white-haired gentleman between them; they were pretending to drag him along. Behind that merry group came Dr. Crawford and his two sons laden with bags and boxes, and various other signs of approaching Christmas.

Once inside the house, Sybil stood in front of the door, her hands clasping the lapels of his coat, and said, "Daddy, I wonder every day of my life how you can possibly get on without me."

The elders laughed, but the twins were immediately indignant. Forgetting their seven-

teen years, they began to protest vociferously. But Sybil knew Bunny and Bobs.

"Bunny," she cried, "how thin you've grown! And, Bobs, I love you with your hair up!"

The twins were pacified, and the merry talk went on — such chatter as passes in every family on the day before Christmas, when all the members are home again, and there are so many things that must be told and so many more that must be kept secret until the morrow.

Certainly the happiest person in the room was the white-haired old gentleman who sat in front of the blazing logs in the fire-place, with Bunny on one arm of his chair and Bobs on the other. He was "grandfather" to the Crawford children, as well as to his own granddaughter, Sybil. Yet it was one of the twins who at last brought a shadow to his face.

"Daddy! Sybil!" Bunny cried. "Think of our forgetting! It is the greatest surprise

in the world! You *never* can guess! We have had a telegram from Donald, and he is coming — home — for — Christmas!"

"Good!" cried the doctor. "Could n't be better!"

Sybil said nothing. A close observer might almost have supposed that the news was no surprise to her. But when she saw the change pass over her grandfather's face, her tender smile became suddenly wistful. She bent over and kissed him.

"Darling-dear," she said, "I think you must be tired."

"The colonel is too much of a soldier to admit that," said Dr. Crawford. "But if we stay talking here all day we shall have to postpone Christmas. Abundance, Dick, take the colonel's things to his room. Roberta, an hour in the kitchen helping Norah will also help our little Miss Gadabout. Sybil, I want my general manager to go with me this morning. I have only a few calls to make."

Sybil was into her furs again in a flash; and

in a very short while every remaining member of the family was busily occupied.

In the evening they trimmed the tree, and hung the great ball of mistletoe from the chandelier. It was not until the stroke of twelve that the stockings were finally up, and all the bedroom doors closed for the night.

"Now, no one must come downstairs," were Mrs. Crawford's last words, "until the first breakfast-bell rings. There is certainly one advantage in having you children grown up. Father and I do not have to send you back to bed at three o'clock, and four o'clock, and five o'clock in the morning, and finally begin the day, cold and breakfastless, at six!"

CHAPTER III

MERRY CHRISTMAS

But Mrs. Crawford's warnings, and all good intentions, were forgotten at six o'clock on Christmas morning. The ringing of the front doorbell, the whistle of the office call-tube, the shower of snow against window panes, and the pounding of the old brass knocker would have penetrated any slumber. Every member of the family, including Bunny's white cat and Roberta's collie dog "Hermit," was instantly awake. It was Donald! And with Donald just home, and Christmas Day just dawning, what sleep could there be in the Crawford household?

Donald, so big and brown, would not even let Mrs. Crawford escape to the kitchen for an instant to remind Norah of his preference for brown sugar on his buckwheat cakes; and if his eyes rested on Sybil more than on the others, every one was too busy talking to

notice it. It was such a merry breakfast as the doctor's old house had not known for a year.

Then came the time for opening the gifts; and now the colonel was the center of attraction, for it was the time-honored custom of the family for the eldest person to distribute his gifts first.

"Now," said the colonel, seating himself in an armchair in front of the Christmas tree, "if some of you young men will bring in that trunk we left in the hall yesterday, we will try to find out who has been forgotten."

Laughing, they brought it in and set it before him, and Sybil produced the key.

"Ha!" said the colonel. "I packed this myself, with my brother John's help. Would n't have a woman fussing round while I put the things in." He smiled at Mrs. Crawford, as if in apology. "All the best things on top, ma'am, where best things belong. Here's a ham, now, finest white stock. Smoked after my own receipt. And this wooden box, now,

from Sair-Ann; believe there's a cake in it. Now, let me see — here — yes, here it is! My brother John sent this to you, Robert. Pretty small, and shabby enough, but not without interest, I think. Young Mr. Poe sent it down to my father after one of his visits at Montebello. Signed, you see — a first edition."

All the young people were crowding round Dr. Crawford. The doctor held the little book as only a book lover handles the rarity that he has long coveted.

The colonel turned to the trunk again. "This, ma'am, my sister Sophia sent you. There seemed to be a ball of wool on every chair at Montebello for some weeks before Christmas. I dare say some of them went into that — er — fascinator, do you ladies call it?"

It was a wonderful trunk, almost as hard to empty as the purse of Fortunatus; but at last it no longer held so much as a scrap of paper. The twins were puzzled. Miss Sophia, Mr. John, all their old friends at Montebello had

"HA!" SAID THE COLONEL. "I PACKED THIS MYSELF"

sent them gifts; but there was nothing from the colonel.

The old gentleman himself was beginning to look anxious. He frowned in his most terrible manner, and puffed out his cheeks.

"Ha! Hum! Ha!" he muttered. He pretended to shake the empty trunk. "Well! Now, that's very strange, very strange, indeed!"

He patted his coat, shook his head, frowned, and coughed; but at last when the fingers of his two hands had explored the depths of his waistcoat pockets, they rested there for a moment, apparently satisfied with what they had found. He smiled at the twins.

"Now, that's very fortunate," he said. "If I had not just happened to remember where I had put those two parcels —"

The colonel was the dearest old gentleman alive, but there was no doubt whatever that he knew how to tease.

"O-o-oh!" sighed Bobs, in an agony of suspense, and Abundance echoed, "O-o-oh!"

Then the colonel took pity on them. He drew two small parcels from his waistcoat pockets, and, with a most courtly bow, presented one to each of the girls.

"Oh!" said Bunny, and "Ah!" said Bobs, and both threw themselves upon the colonel with embraces as violent as if they were still only twelve; for each box contained that treasure dearest to a young girl's heart. In each, lovely and glittering, was a tiny enameled wrist-watch — blue for Abundance, and for Bobs a glowing red.

Of course, to the twins, those watches made all the rest of Christmas seem pale and insignificant — all, that is, except the crowning excitement of the day. It was not until after dinner that Donald made known his great piece of news. Before that, every hour had been crowded with the usual affairs of Christmas — parcels tied with red ribbons and bits of holly to be taken to various houses up and down the street, and several baskets packed by Mrs. Crawford to be carried to some of

the doctor's poor patients. Sybil and Donald somehow managed to slip away during the morning; they returned barely in time for dinner.

When Sybil came in, glowing and rosy-cheeked, her eyes sought Mrs. Crawford's; then she flew to the shelter of that little lady's arms as a bird flies to its nest. There was a whispered question, and a whispered answer from Sybil. Mrs. Crawford laughed, low and happily, but bent her face over Sybil's dark curls, to hide the tears in her eyes. The colonel was watching them uneasily; fortunately, Norah was just bringing in the turkey, and it would have taken a great deal to keep that hungry family from rushing to the table.

When the nuts had gone the rounds after the plum pudding, the family noticed that Donald had placed four very fat ones before him on the table.

"Don! Are you trying to get all the big ones for yourself?" Bobs demanded.

Donald smiled, and started to open the nuts, each of which contained two kernels.

"It's going to be a philopena," said Bunny.

"Quite right, O bountiful one!" said Donald. "A philopena it is, but of a rather new sort." He rose, and solemnly presented one kernel to each person round the table, except Sybil.

"I shall ask you," he said, "each to hold an almond in a right hand, and to lock arms, philopena fashion, with his neighbor. That's right, make a ring-around-a-rosy, all standing. And now, as we eat our nuts, let us all wish for happiness, and a safe voyage to India's coral strand, for the lady who is very soon to be Mrs. Donald Crawford."

But the toast, or philopena, was never eaten. The colonel, suddenly quite pale, turned to the girl seated beside him; and, in a flash, she jumped up and was in his arms. Mrs. Crawford as suddenly sat down, looking very happy and very tearful. The doctor and his eldest son were violently shaking each

other's hand, and Dick and Hallam, Bunny and Bobs, simply stood, staring — speechless for the first time in their lives.

Hallam was the first to break the spell. With a whoop, he sprang round the table, gave Donald a tremendous whack on the back, then clasped Sybil in a violent embrace. Dick shook Donald's hand, and then discovered that his spectacles were misty and needed polishing. It was not until the laughter of the others pierced their daze that Bunny and Bobs found a word to say. Then Bunny cried,

"You wretches! You never told us a word!"

"When did it happen?" cried Bobs.

"Were you surprised?" said Bunny. "Oh, may we be bridesmaids?"

How the grown-ups laughed, how proud Donald looked, and how rosy Sybil was!

Suddenly Mrs. Crawford exclaimed: "Donald! What was it you said about India? What does it mean?"

Every one looked at Donald, and the colonel reached again for one of Sybil's hands.

Donald bent over his mother's chair, put his arms round her, and said: "Ah, little mother! I was afraid that would be hard for you! But try not to mind it too much, dear, for it makes everything possible for Sybil and me."

He stood up, and looked at the colonel as he said: "I hope I shall not have to keep her away very long, sir. But it's a chance of a lifetime, really. I don't know why the chief selected me to go. Two bridges — at Sakkar and Shikarpur — and I'm to have charge of the construction. I could not have expected to win such a job in ten years. But, of course, I'm not going without Sybil."

"India!" said the colonel, under his breath, and thereafter sat with bowed head, apparently hearing nothing of the further talk.

"When do you go?" Dr. Crawford asked.

"Not until spring, sir," Donald replied. "We're to be married in April."

The doctor and his two older sons straightway became absorbed in that masculine talk that finds bolts and spans and caissons and tensile strength more interesting than matters of trousseaus and details of weddings; but it was long, indeed, before the twins could think or talk of anything else.

No one noticed that the colonel had slipped out of the room, for even Mrs. Crawford and Sybil were lost in considerations of the great approaching event. But when the old gentleman had been upstairs alone for an hour or more, sitting with bent head in the dark, he was roused by a gentle knock on his door.

"Come in," he said, as if it did not very much matter who was there. The door opened, and some one entered softly.

"Grandfather?" said Bunny, questioningly; for it was too dark to see far into the room.

"Yes," said the colonel, in a spiritless voice.

Yet when some one laid two arms round his neck, and perched on the arm of his chair,

and waited with him, silently, patiently, it did not seem quite so dark.

After a while there was another knock on the door. Again the colonel said, "Come in."

And once more some one crept in, and dropped a little kiss on the old gentleman's white hair. "You still have us, Grandfather," said Bobs.

And somehow, after that, the room seemed scarcely dark at all.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAID OF ORLEANS

A DAY or two after Christmas, Bobs was swinging along Main Street, her arms full of bundles, her cheeks red with the cold. For all her resemblance to her twin, Roberta was by far the more active of the two, and consequently the one who was always sent on errands. To-day she had carried a long shopping list to grocer's and butcher's, and was on her way home; but her thoughts were far away from the activities of the busy little thoroughfare. Sybil and Donald, and the romance of their engagement and the coming marriage, and the alluring promise of bridesmaids' dresses, were enough to set Bobs' mind to spinning fairy stories. She was so intent upon these, in fact, that she was startled when a voice at her side spoke her name.

"Bobs Crawford! You certainly do walk fast!"

Roberta laughed at her own fright, and turned to the speaker. It was the girl who had sat next her on the sled on Christmas Eve.

"Oh! Mattie Henderson! You made me jump!" she laughed.

Mattie gave her an adoring look. "I did n't mean to," she said. "But I've been chasing you for two blocks!" Then she added, "Oh, what beautiful furs!"

Bobs smiled down at her muff and scarf, the Christmas gifts of father and mother. "Yes — are n't they? I love fox!"

Mattie had very large blue eyes, and they had the worshiping look of some amiable but rather stupid animal. She wore her hair pulled forward over her ears in an exaggerated imitation of the fashion of the moment, and her clothes, too, were always a little pronounced for the conservative tastes of South Wickham, which prided itself upon its refinement. Mr. Henderson had brought his family with him a year ago, when he came from a distant State to be superintendent of

the cotton mill down by the river. There were a large number of children in the family, of whom Mattie was the eldest, facts which she frequently referred to.

She put out her hand and smoothed Bobs' muff. "Oh, *yes!*" she said. "I adore it! But, of course, it does n't fall to *my* lot to have such things. Not with *six* children younger than I!"

Bobs flushed a little; she really wished Mattie would n't always refer to her family's necessity for striving to make both ends meet. Mattie, however, was quite oblivious of her slip in good taste.

"They are the most becoming things I ever saw you have on," she declared. "You know, Bobs, I think you are perfectly beautiful. I think you look like an actress."

Bobs was not beautiful and she knew it; but when one's family is not particularly appreciative of such good looks as one has — well, it was not so bad to have some one express a little admiration.

"An actress!" she said. "Oh — I don't think that, exactly!" she protested modestly. "Of course, I do know that I look like —"

"Like Joan of Arc," Mattie supplied, in a hushed voice. "Yes, you do."

Bobs knew that Mattie was looking at her with that intent, blue-eyed stare of adoration, but she walked on with an appearance of unconcern. She had once read that royalty and nobility, who have to get used to being looked at, when in public, always wear a manner of great simplicity and calmness.

"Any one could tell, just by looking at you, Roberta, that you are like Joan of Arc inside, too," said Mattie, with great earnestness. "Any one could see that you have visions."

Bobs' heart seemed to give a little leap. Visions! She never really thought about it before, but, of course, she *did* have visions! Yes, of course, she had! She turned her head and smiled at Mattie. "Well, if I have, I think you are wonderful, too, Mattie," she

said. "I think you have a wonderful knowledge of character."

Mattie's eyes looked even rounder than usual. She was not smiling; her feelings were far too deep for smiles. The girls walked on in silence for a while. Presently Mattie asked, —

"Bobs, would you mind if I called you, when we are alone together in private, if I called you — Joan?"

"Oh!" said Bobs. "Oh! I — I don't think — I don't really feel as though I had a right to that name, Mattie! It sounds — sort of — of sacrilegious, somehow!"

Mattie looked disappointed. "Well," she acquiesced. Then, when she had thought it over a little, she said, "But have n't you a middle name I could call you by? Bobs and Roberta don't seem to me to fit you very well. I wish you'd let me call you *some*thing else!"

Bobs giggled. "My middle name," said she, "is Abigail! I don't believe Abigail suits me very much better than Bobs, do you?"

But Mattie's sense of humor had never had the advantage of living in the Crawford family: it was, so to speak, too small for its age. "No," she said, quite gravely. "But there *are* names that suit you! Beatrice, and Elaine, and Gloria, and — oh, ever so many others. Would you mind if I called you one of those?"

"Beatrice might do," said Bobs. They had reached the Crawford gate. Bobs turned so that she could give Mattie a very decided look. "But don't you ever dare, Mattie Henderson, to call me that before anybody!"

"Of *course* not!" Mattie protested; she, too, had younger brothers! Then she added, looking wistfully toward the windows of the Crawford house, now so gay with their Christmas wreaths, "Oh, Bobs, — I mean Beatrice, — I do wish I could meet your sister Sybil! I do think her story was the most romantic thing I ever listened to in all my life!"

"It's more so than ever, and you can,"

cried Bobs; and although her sentences were rather mixed, Mattie understood. "Because she's even engaged, now! To my brother Donald. We are going to be the bridesmaids — I and Bunny and a friend of Sybil's from Maryland, Molly Rutherford."

So Mattie, who had come fully a mile out of her way to walk with Bobs, turned off homewards, thrilled and happy.

A few days afterwards the family was gathered together in the living-room after supper. The colonel was on the old-fashioned sofa, with a twin on each side of him. Sybil was perched on the broad arm of Mother-dear's chair — for Sybil and Mother-dear seemed never willing to be separated, in these precious days of being together again, with an even longer parting in prospect. Donald was sitting where he could watch Sybil, while he and the doctor and Dick were busily talking. Only Hallam was apart from the little family group.

Against the wall of the far end of the long

room there was a console table with a marble top, and above it a large gold-framed mirror hung. Hallam was standing in front of the table, twisting and turning and making strange grimaces and falling into stranger postures. For a long time none of the others paid the least attention to him; families have a way of ignoring their younger masculine members, except in the moments when those members most desire to remain unobserved. But Hallam knew that if he persisted long enough somebody would be sure to see him. And, indeed, before long, Sybil did see him, and quietly whispered to Mother-dear to watch him.

He would pretend to hold a hand-glass in his hand, and with its aid observe his own profile in the big mirror. Then he would assume a studied pose, his face upturned, with an expression as rapt and impressive as his freckles would permit. Then, slowly, his eyes still looking into space above him — really into the corner of the room where the steel en-

graving of Washington Crossing the Delaware hung—he would slowly put out his right hand, somewhat as though he were offering to shake hands with some invisible being of the air. Again he would stretch himself up to his full height, standing very erect, and raise his arm above his head, in the manner of some gallant leader raising aloft his sword. There were other poses, other expressions, too, and Hallam repeated them, over and over, as though he were rehearsing them for a play.

"What *do* you suppose he is doing that for?" whispered Sybil, silently laughing.

Mother-dear, too, was quivering with mirth. "I think he must be imagining he's some one else," she said. Presently, when he had achieved a particularly fine effect, she murmured. "If it were not just *too* absurd I should almost believe he was thinking himself Joan of Arc!"

Sybil bowed her head in laughter, and at that moment Hallam realized that he was being watched. But instead of showing the

embarrassment that might have been expected, he grinned at them impishly and went out of the room, to return a moment or two later draped in a much-worn knitted afghan, holding aloft the colonel's gold-headed cane. He winked at his mother and Sybil, and advanced toward the center of the room, with short, dramatic steps, his eyes turned upward.

Perhaps Sybil's uncontrollable mirth, perhaps Hallam's advance, attracted the attention of the others. By the time he was nearly in the middle of the floor every eye in the room was upon him; but the three on the sofa were the last to look up.

Hallam stood in their midst — his arm still upraised, his face still turned upwards and wearing its rapt expression. When he paused, he raised his left hand and pressed it over his heart.

"The voices!" he whispered, but in a whisper that reached every corner of the room. "The visions! The voices!"

There was a cry, half shriek and half sob,

from Bobs. She sprang off the sofa and fairly leaped upon Hallam, pounding him with her fists; then she fled swiftly and blindly from the room.

The others were roaring with laughter. In the mysterious manner of families, they had all, at last, understood. Hallam, collapsed in the middle of the floor, entangled in the afghan, was hugging himself and rocking with glee.

But Bunny, ever faithful to her twin, Bunny who had also been the more or less secret witness to strange posturings, bent over him.

"Hallam Crawford," she said, in a voice low enough to be unheard by the others through their laughter, "don't you *dare* to tell one word! Don't you *dare* to! If you do, I'll tell every blessed thing I know about you, do you hear?"

Hallam, looking up into the face so close above his own, murmured dramatically, "The voices! The—"

But faithful Bunny had gone upstairs to try to console her twin.

CHAPTER V

AGAIN THE VOICES

THE Christmas holidays passed, and school began again. Colonel Crockett went back to Maryland, somewhat unwillingly leaving his adored granddaughter for a visit to her adopted parents, so soon, by marriage, to become even closer relations.

"Oh, I'm going — yes, I'm going!" said he, shaking his head and pretending to be very much injured. "I know an old man's only in the way when such foolishness as wedding folderols are in the air. I know when I'm in the way!"

Sybil went to him and sat on his knee, putting her hands on his ruddy old cheeks. "You criss-cross, crabbed old, silly old fraud," she said. "Look me squarely in the eye!"

The colonel gave her a twinkling glance, and immediately looked away again.

"There!" cried Sybil. "You can't even look

me in the eye! Now, tell the truth — *are* you in the way?"

"Tut-tut-tut-tut!" the colonel spluttered. "I am not on the witness stand, miss!"

"No, you're a prisoner, and you'll remain a prisoner until you tell the truth! Are — you — in — the — way?"

"Ha — hum!"

Sybil pretended to pinch his cheeks, and he made a wry face. "Tell the truth — are you —"

"I don't know."

She dropped the lightest of kisses on the end of his aristocratic old nose. "Tell the truth!" she repeated; and the colonel laughed up at tall Donald, who was an amused observer of the little scene.

"Now, what is a mere man going to do," he demanded, "when —"

But Sybil had not quite conquered yet. "Tell the truth! Are — you — in — the — way?"

"No," said the colonel.

"And are perfectly wonderful beautiful

wedding clothes that your grandfather gives you only foolish folderols?"

"No," said the colonel.

"And are you the preciousest grandfather in the world?"

"No," said the colonel.

"What? Tell the—"

"Oh — yes! Yes!"

"And the handsomest?"

"Hum — yes!"

"And is it the real plain honest truth that you are going back to Montebello just because you know I'll follow you before long and we can have more hours alone together than we can here?"

The colonel held her off and looked at her. "You witch!" said he.

And that was Sybil's way with her grandfather. It was, indeed, the truth that the old gentleman could not bear to have her out of his sight for long, but by the middle of January he was glad to return to the milder climate of southern Maryland. He left with Sybil a

generous allowance for her trousseau, and especial directions that the twins were to have just the dresses they wanted for bridesmaids' costumes.

"But, Grandfather, Molly must have something to say about that, too! And usually the bride is not completely ignored! Her tastes, surely, are to be considered just a little!"

"Not at all, not at all!" said the colonel, to the infinite delight and satisfaction of the twins. "I have not had a wedding for over fifty years, and I reckon I'm going to have my way about this one, miss! And I say that the bridesmaids are to wear precisely whatever they wish to — green, or yellow, or maybe red! Something cheerful, anyway!"

Even the twins smiled at this, but the fact that they were to have some choice in what they were to wear was enormously gratifying to them.

After the departure of the colonel, things in the Crawford household settled down, as much as things ever do settle down when

there is a wedding in sight. The twins went back to school, and Mrs. Crawford and Sybil seemed to have a great deal of sewing on hand. Hallam developed the habit of singing or whistling the wedding march whenever he came into the room where Sybil was, until he found that it did not tease her at all; then he returned to his imitations of Joan of Arc, until poor Bobs was almost moved to tears.

"Mother-dear," said she one day, when Hallam had been stalking around with his hand upraised and whispering, "The voices! The visions!" until she simply could not stand it another minute longer, "Mother, won't you *please* do something to make that child behave?"

They were in the upper hall. Mrs. Crawford had her arms full of muslin and lace which she was carrying into the sewing-room. She paused, and looked at Hallam, her lips twitching.

"What's the matter with Hallam, darling?" she asked soothingly.

Bobs' eyes suddenly filled with tears. "He's acting like a perfect dunce!" said she. "Just look at him! Now, I never did that, not in all my life! Won't you please make him stop, Mother?"

"The voices! Ah — the voices!" This from Hallam, poised at the head of the stairs ready for instant flight, if flight should become desirable.

Mrs. Crawford laughed. "Oh, I think you had better settle it between yourselves," she advised.

But Bobs detained her. "Mother! Do you mean to confess that you cannot control your own child?" she demanded, with a note of tragedy in her voice.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Crawford calmly. "Hallam, why do you tease your sister?" Whereupon she disappeared into the sewing-room.

"I tell you what I'll do," said Hallam, looking slyly at Bobs. "Will you give me that two-bladed penknife of yours?"

"That old thing? I don't want it, anyhow!" Bobs brightened.

"And your new ice-skates?"

"No, I will not! You little beast!"

Hallam pressed his hand over his heart. "I hear them! The voices — the visions! I hear them!"

But although he was doubtless rather mixed about it, Bobs did not remain to tell him so. She fled into the room which she shared with Bunny, and banged the door behind her. But Hallam knew her. He put his lips to the keyhole.

"Voices! Visions! Visions! Vi —"

The door opened abruptly, and Hallam ducked. A penknife slid across the floor of the hall, and a pair of shining skates clattered down outside, and then the door closed again. Hallam pounced upon the coveted treasures, and went on his way with shrill whistles and catcalls of derision; but Roberta knew that she had bought her freedom — although the price had been painfully high.

Yet there was one person with whom she could still indulge in the dear delight of imagining herself like the Maid of Orleans. The gorgeous poppy grows from the tiniest of black seeds; the course of many a life is changed by a mere syllable. In spite of Hallam's teasing, the little seed of thought dropped in Bobs' mind by the adoring Mattie was growing, day by day, into a most highly colored blossom of imagination. Whenever she caught Mattie's round blue eyes upon her, Bobs remembered; and whenever, by chance or by earnest endeavor on Mattie's part, they were alone together, Mattie's romantic soul would invariably be stirred to the point of speech.

Of course, the opportunities of their being alone were but few; Bobs and Bunny had always sat together in school — never would the twins have consented to separation! — and they usually went arm in arm or at least shoulder to shoulder at recess and elsewhere. But during the weeks following the Christmas

holidays, more than once Bunny looked at Bobs curiously, wonderingly, with an expression in the depths of her eyes of being both puzzled and a little hurt. For, instead of always walking with her twin, Bobs was falling into the way of drifting off with Mattie Henderson, sauntering along the corridors or sitting in a corner. Whenever Bunny would draw near, the conversation in which they seemed so deeply interested would abruptly stop — and poor Bunny would feel herself very much in the way. She would go away again, after speaking pleasantly and trying to pretend that there was nothing strange in the situation; but there would be a very big lump in her throat; and sometimes her eyes felt hot and stinging, as though the tears were very near. Never in all their lives had Bobs preferred any one else's company to her twin's, even for a moment. Bunny simply could not understand it. There were times when she felt that she almost hated Mattie Henderson!

So things went on through January. Then,

early in February, everything seemed to happen at once. The weather had been uncommonly mild and damp. A great many people had colds. Bunny was one of the unfortunates; and Bunny the gentle, Bunny the sweet-tempered, was apt to be neither one nor the other when she was sick. She was decidedly cross on a certain miserable morning when the rain was turning to sleet and it seemed as though all the world were shivering and sniffling. She and Bobs were quite cool toward each other on the way to school, and poor Bunny's feelings were not made happier by her observing a look or a signal pass between her sister and Mattie Henderson. During the afternoon her head ached so miserably that she had to ask to be allowed to go home.

"And I hope she'll enjoy her hateful old Mattie Henderson!" she said to herself, after Mother-dear had tucked her into bed and her father had given her a dose of medicine and prescribed a course of absolute quiet.

"Better keep the rest of the family out of

the room," Daddy said to Mother Crawford. "It looks like tonsillitis."

It might have been expected that Mattie would make the most of the chance of having uncontested possession of her idol. No sooner was school out than she came across the assembly room to Bobs, her eyes for once almost looking intelligent, so excited was she.

"Oh, Beatreechy, look!" she said, producing a slip of printed paper. Since bestowing upon Bobs the name that she thought more fitting than Roberta Abigail, Mattie had discovered the Italian pronunciation of Beatrice, the literature teacher having given a little talk on the great poets, carefully pronouncing the name of Dante's inspiration in the Italian manner, which Mattie thereafter imitated as best she could.

Bobs took the clipping that Mattie handed her. It had been cut from a motion-picture magazine, and announced that the Magnifico Film Company would produce, on a date a month or so in the future, a picture play

entitled "The Maid of Orleans"; evidently, from the description that followed the announcement, the play was to exceed in grandeur everything that had gone before, outshining every previous photoplay that had ever been thrown on the screen. Bobs read it through, then handed the paper back to Mattie.

They looked intently into each other's eyes. "It is my absolute belief," said Mattie solemnly, "that if they once saw you, Beatreechy, they would insist upon your taking the part of Joan of Arc." She paused, and Bobs' face suddenly became quite red. "You know I always *said* that you looked like an actress."

A great stillness seemed to have settled all around them, although there was really a good deal of chatter and moving about in the big hall. It was a wonderful moment.

"But of course there is no way they could," said Bobs.

To that Mattie had to agree, though she did so with reluctance.

But time brings many things to pass, and the next day something else happened which would have seemed, to most people, to have no connection with the clipping from the motion-picture magazine. The principal of the High School, who had been ill with pneumonia, died, and the school was given holiday for the rest of the week. Mattie did a great deal of whispering to Bobs, and the result of it was that Bobs sought out Mother Crawford with an unusual request.

"Mother-dear," she asked, "would you be willing to have me visit Mattie Henderson?"

"Certainly, darling. But don't stay until dark," Mrs. Crawford replied.

"Oh, but I mean — I mean really to visit her, Mother-dear. For several days!"

Mrs. Crawford looked up. "My dear child! Why on earth should you visit Mattie Henderson for a few days, when you can see each other every day anyway? She only lives at the other end of the town, you know!"

"Well — but she asked me to, Mother-

dear. Please let me! Please do, Mother-dear!"

"But I really know very little about the Hendersons, Roberta! I am not at all sure —"

"Oh, now, Mother-dear! You do know about them, and Daddy does too! And Mattie has been here a dozen times! Please let me go, Mother-dear!"

It was finally settled that if Mrs. Henderson were to telephone the invitation to Mrs. Crawford, Bobs should be permitted to go; and the consequence was that before supper-time Bobs was joyfully packing Sybil's suitcase, borrowed for the occasion. Poor Bunny's cold had developed into genuine tonsillitis, and she was quarantined in the sunny room on the top floor which was called, in the family, "The private sanatorium"; otherwise, Bobs declared to Sybil, who was helping her pack her things, she would not have deserted her.

When the suitcase was ready to be closed, and Bobs had put on her precious wrist-watch and her hat and coat, and was about

to throw her fox scarf around her shoulders, she paused and looked at Sybil.

"Oh, Sybil, may I try on your furs, just to see how I look in them?" she pleaded.

"Of course," laughed Sybil. Her furs were magnificent, a most costly set of matched skins, dark and soft and glossy, an extravagance of the colonel's and handsome enough for a duchess. Bobs took them from the closet and arrayed herself in them.

"They are the most perfectly wonderful things I ever saw," she declared. Then she looked at Sybil. "Oh, Sybil — I know it is asking a great deal, but — but do you think — do you think you *could* let me wear them?"

Sybil looked surprised and startled. "Wear them?"

"I'm only going to be gone three days, you know! And I'll take my own along, and if it's bad weather I'll wear my own! You won't need these furs with your big fur coat! Or you can wear Bunny's! Oh, please, Sybil!"

Of course it was asking a great deal — the

furs were extremely costly — but, after all, the child was only going to a friend's house, and for three days — And Sybil remembered how she herself would have felt, at Bobs' age.

"Well," she said, and then was glad she had consented, for Bobs' smile was one of ecstasy. "But do be careful of them, dear, for you know they *are* rather valuable! And Grandfather gave them to me!"

"Oh, Sybil, I think you are a perfect angel! And I know just how you feel about them — I feel just that way about my watch!"

"Better not confess to Mother-dear," Sybil laughed. Then she added, "You little peacock!"

That night Mattie and her guest stayed awake for hours, talking.

"Oh, but I know Daddy would n't like it!" Bobs said, more than once.

But after Mattie had talked on and on, she changed her protest to, "Well, of course, I suppose no one would really object to having *fame* in the family!"

CHAPTER VI

FAREWELL, BEATREECHY

THE trip on the trolley cars from South Wickham to the big city takes only some forty-five minutes. Both girls had often been there before, but Bobs' conscience was troubling her. Indeed, her courage would probably have given out altogether if it had not been for the sustaining fact that she was feeling particularly elegant in Sybil's furs — Mattie was wearing Bobs' set of fox. Besides, Mattie found ways to meet all of her spoken doubts and objections.

"But I never *have* been to the city alone," said Bobs uneasily. "I don't believe Mother would like our going alone!"

"But you were n't as old as you are now," Mattie's soothing voice replied. "You even have your hair up, *now!*"

"Yes, I know," Bobs admitted. "And of

course it is n't as if we did n't know the way!"

For the girls had found the address of the Magnifico Film Company in the back of the cheap magazine from which Mattie had cut the announcement of the forthcoming masterpiece, and it seemed nothing short of a miracle that it was in the familiar near-by city.

"I suppose they have ways of fixing people up to give them quite a good resemblance to other people they are supposed to look like. But I just *know*, Beatreechy, that when the president of the company sees *you*, he will insist upon your being Joan the Maid."

"Well," said Bobs, "I shall tell him, to begin with, that I shall refuse to act for him unless he gives you a very prominent part, too, Mattie." Presently she added, "It's a good thing I learned to ride horseback when I was visiting Sybil and Grandfather down in Maryland."

"I can see you now," said Mattie, with her

adoring blue-eyed stare. "I can see just how you will look on that white charger!"

Bobs was modestly silent, but she gave Mattie an appreciative smile. Mattie went on:—

"And I can just see your family, Beatreechy, when they behold you upon the screen. I'll tell you what you do—you watch out for the 'Maid of Orleans' at the Palace Theater, and the first night it's there you invite all your family to go to the movies—quite casually, you know. And then it will burst upon them at the proper moment."

"Oh, my goodness! I forgot about the pictures outside the theater! They will see them! They will recognize me!"

But even at that Mattie was downcast for only a moment. "Oh, no! No, they won't! They will just think it's your natural resemblance to Joan of Arc!"

"That's so," Bobs agreed. "I forgot that—for a moment."

They were silent for a little while, then

Mattie remarked: "Well, I must confess, Beatreechy, that I shall be glad to see your genius recognized! I can just imagine the feeling of your family when they realize what you have really been, all the time, without their knowing it. I can just imagine how they will feel."

"And I can just imagine how your family will feel, Mattie, darling," Bobs replied, slipping a hand into Mattie's muff — which was really her own! — and giving Mattie's hand a little squeeze, "when you show them how much money you can earn to help them with!"

So they chatted all the way in. The address of the Film Company was in a part of the city where they had never been, but it was easy enough to find. They had only to walk east a few blocks from the car to which they transferred, to discover, on a dingy loft building in front of which a pale-gray limousine and a number of cheaper automobiles were standing, the sign, —

MAGNIFICO FILM COMPANY
Studio on
Fifth Floor
Take Elevator

"Mercy!" said Bobs, "this does n't look very much like a studio, to me! It looks like a — a stable, or a warehouse, or something!"

As they paused in the dirty hall through which many feet had evidently tramped that day, the elevator descended. It was obviously a freight elevator, but as there was no one else to question, they spoke to the elevator boy, asking their way to the Magnifico Film Company.

"Fift' floor," said the elevator boy, adding, in a resonant shout, "Up!"

"We wish to see the president," said Bobs, with all the dignity that Sybil's furs could lend her.

"Fift' floor! *Up!!*" said — or shouted — the elevator boy.

"But it says studio on the fifth floor," Mattie objected. "We want to see the —"

"Fift' floor!! *UP!!*".

The boy seemed to have nothing else to say, and with a giggle Bobs stepped into the freight elevator, Mattie following her. The boy put his head out of the door, gave a final shout of "Up!!" then closed the door with a bang, and the elevator slowly ascended — very slowly, with queer creaking noises and many jerks. Neither of the girls had ever been in such an apparently undecided elevator; they drew more closely together.

At last it stopped, and the boy opened the door and again shouted, "Fift' floor!" But this time he added, "Down!"

The girls stepped out, into a small square room through whose dirty windows the fire-escapes of adjoining tenements could be seen, with a motley array of the many colored garments which usually decorate such places.

The only furniture in the room was a bench along two sides of the wall, and a small telephone switchboard desk in a corner, at which sat a young woman with blue-black hair and the reddest lips that Bobs had ever seen, who said, over and over again, "Hello . . . Hello . . ." while she rapidly chewed gum, and all in a manner of the deepest gloom.

There were a number of other people in the room, some crowding on the bench, others leaning against every available bit of wall space, others standing about like cattle, waiting, although as far as the girls could see there was nothing to wait for. And yet, by the time the elevator door had banged behind them, they began to discover that there was nothing else to do but wait. Surely, they thought, some one would come forward to take their names in to the president of the company; and Bobs had the feeling that they were wasting valuable time. They whispered a few sentences to each other, and agreed that there was certainly no one in

that crowded room to whom they cared to speak.

After the elevator had been up and down six or eight times, another door opened, and a short young man came a foot or two into the room. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and had a brown derby hat on the back of his head. He had the thickest lips and the most prominent blue eyes that the girls had ever seen, and the color of his face was like dough that has not risen. He had a pad of paper and a pencil in his hand. There was a little stir among all the people in the room, as if it were he that they had been waiting for.

"No more casting to-day!" he said. "Posi-*tive*-ly full up." Then his look fell upon Bobs and Mattie. "But say — we can use you two chickens! Come along!"

Bobs stood quite still, horror-struck that a stranger — and such a stranger! — should have dared to address her in that way; but Mattie was smiling.

A girl who had been in the room when they

arrived, and whom they disapproved of because she had hair that looked like excelsior, came forward.

"Aw, say, Al, that ain't fair!" she said. "These two dames got here an hour after I did, and, honest, I need the money! Have a heart!"

But the white-faced young man made a gesture as if he would thrust her back. "Nothin' doin'!" said he. "You don't look the part, baby!"

As Bobs afterwards explained to Bunny, it was that remark about her looking the part, and nothing else, which persuaded her to follow Mattie and the young man through the door, which instantly closed behind them.

"Dressin'-room to yer left," the young man said. "And you'll have to hurry, see? 'cause the star's most ready, and we got four scenes to make this morning and a trip to the suburbs this afternoon. Step lively, now!"

But that was too much for Bobs. She drew herself up to her full height — which was not

a very great one — and made the most of Sybil's furs.

"We wish to see the president," said she, very coldly, pressing her lips together after she had spoken.

The young man had been walking away, but at that he turned, and looked at her. "What's that?" he asked.

Bobs repeated her remark. The young man grinned — and somehow his look made Bobs feel as though there were goose-flesh all over her.

"Say, this ain't Washington!" he said. "What yer givin' us? Did you take this for the White House?"

They were standing in a sort of corridor along which, on the left, there was a row of closed doors; but on the right-hand side there was only an enormous hall in which a great deal of noise was going on and a great many people were moving about, and which seemed to contain a cluttered mass of stage scenery, miscellaneous furniture (all very dingy), and

great coils of black wire that lay over the floor like gigantic, endless snakes. It did not occur to either of the girls that this chaotic place could be the studio. It was so entirely unattractive, so entirely different from anything they had expected to find, that neither of them more than glanced at it. The very unpleasant young man and their desire to have their proper standing recognized at once were uppermost in their minds.

"She means the president of this company," Mattie said. "We wish to see the president of this company. And the sooner the better."

That had its effect on the young man. "Oh," he said. "Relations? Or by appointment?"

He was really very stupid! "No. Not at all," said Mattie. "This lady has come to take the part of Joan of Arc in 'The Maid of Orleans.'"

The young man's mouth fell open; Bobs told Bunny, afterwards, that he looked just like a fish, with his mouth that way and his horrid popping eyes.

"You can see the resemblance for yourself," Mattie added. "You can see how much she looks like Joan of Arc."

The horrid young man swallowed. Then he waved to a very hurried-looking, tired-looking man who had just come out of one of the rooms of the closed doors with a mass of crumpled typewritten papers in his hand, and was hastening out upon the floor of the studio.

"Say, Eddie, c'm 'ere!" he called; and the tired-looking man approached, in his hurry trotting like the rabbit in "Alice in Wonderland"; Bobs would not have been surprised to hear him murmur distractedly, "Oh, the duchess, the duchess!"

"They want to be Joan of Arc in the 'Maid of Orleens,'" the young man said, pointing to the two girls as if they were animals in the Zoo. "Asked to see the pres'dent of the comp'ny!"

The tired-looking man smiled — but only with his lips; his eyes remained tired-looking. And yet, to the girls, his smile looked kind.

He seemed to feel that the young man was trying to be funny and had not succeeded very well.

"Dressing-rooms to your left," said he. "And you'll have to hurry!"

Then he trotted off again.

Both girls supposed that he had accepted Bobs in her desired part. Mattie gave her idol a satisfied smile. "What did I tell you?" she asked triumphantly.

And Bobs, her head held high, said to the young man, "I suppose my costume will be provided?"

The young man put his brown derby hat a little farther back on his head. "Say what *is* the matter with you two girlies, anyway? Are you kiddin'? Or what?" Then, doubtless because of the girls' expressions, he explained. "Say, look here! You don't think for a fact you could get into a fillum like the 'Maid of Orleens,' do you? Why, you greenhorns could n't get into a big feature like that, not even as supers, you could n't!"

"Supers!" Mattie repeated the word; neither girls had the least idea of what a super was, and it was not until weeks thereafter that Bobs, by much research, discovered a super to be a person who takes a very small part, inconspicuous and without words, in any theatrical performance.

"Anyway, that fillum was made three months ago, out in California! We don't make big features like that here in the city. All we make here is two-reel comedies."

Bobs felt sick at heart, and her knees were trembling with shame.

"What you want to do," the young man said, "is to get over there to them dressing-rooms as quick as you can and get ready to get in the next scene. It's a church scene, and you'll fit in something fine. Run along now, dearies!"

He had approached them as he spoke, and now had a hand under the elbow of each, and was urging them along. Bobs drew away with a jerk, and turned upon him with all the dig-

nity that her rapidly mounting anger and her already mounted fright would permit.

"Don't you dare to put your hand on me!" she cried. "And we are not your dearies! I never *heard* such impertinence!"

The young man laughed, and patted her on the shoulder with his horrid, puffy, grimy little hand. "Put your claws away, kitten," he said, "and run along!"

Whereupon he walked off, for the man he had called Eddie was waving and beckoning and making it plain to the world that the young man's name was Al.

Bobs was gasping hysterically. "I'm going straight home!" she cried. "I never felt so ashamed in my life! I just *knew* we ought n't to have come! I'm going right straight home! The idea of his daring to *touch* me!"

But Mattie had no intention of going home, nor of letting Bobs do so. Mattie was possessed of the stubbornness which so often goes with placid stupidity.

"Oh, Beatreechy! Think of the money—

and there are so many of us at home!" she said, putting an arm about Bobs' shoulders. "We won't have to see that hateful man again — we'll be acting! Oh, please, Beatreechy, darling!"

So at last they found themselves in the dressing-room; but it was no more like what they had imagined an actress's dressing-room to be than the big, untidy, noisy hall was like their idea of a studio. There were some electric lights hanging from the ceiling by green cords, and against the wall a row of hooks on which were hanging all sorts and descriptions of hats and coats, dresses, and even articles of women s underwear; there were two wooden-seated chairs, and two boxes covered with crétonne that was much the worse for wear — and dirt. There were two cheap mirrors over them. On one wall a large sign stated

NO SMOKING ALLOWED

and on the other another sign announced

NOT RESPONSIBLE
FOR VALUABLES

In a corner was a very small stationary wash-basin with a faucet that dripped, and hanging from a peg beside it was the dirtiest roller towel that Bobs had ever seen.

She shrank back from the door; several women or girls were inside, dressing, and modesty was the first and last lesson in the Crawford household, as cleanliness and daintiness were the second.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "*This* place can't be the dressing-room!"

But it was. A woman whom the others spoke of as "the dresser" asked them if they were "going on" in the church scene, and Mattie replied that they were. Whereupon she held out to each of them a dress — Mattie's a faded and dirty lawn of a fashion

three or four years old, and to Bobs a garment that had once been pale blue satin, but was now scarcely a color at all; both had evidently been worn many times, by many people.

"You 'll have to dress quick," the woman said.

The girls were dismayed. "Oh! I would n't wear *that!*" cried Bobs. "Ugh — I would n't let it touch me! Where are the *new* costumes?"

Some of the other girls and women in the room looked up, curiosity or amusement or sneering displeasure on their faces.

But the "dresser" only tossed the garments aside. "All right! — It's a summer scene, but I see you got on white waists. Take off your hats and coats and hang 'em up wherever you can find room for 'em. I guess you'll do to fill in."

The girls obeyed her, and when they had done so the woman asked them to sit down, and proceeded to rub some rouge and powder on their faces, entirely disregarding Bobs'

shrinking disgust; the rouge and powder alone would have been bad enough, but they had evidently been shared by all the other "actresses."

At last they were herded out of the dressing-room and out upon the floor of the studio. In a distant corner a crowd of people were being drilled in entering and leaving a church; two men were busy with enormous arc lights and greenish-purple lights and lights that glared into one's eyes quite painfully. Another man was busy with a camera, but a camera that was different from any other camera Bobs had ever before seen. Another man was urging the people to do this or that; and hovering back of the camera and the men with the lights, watching everything, missing nothing, yet apparently having very little to do with it all, was the man named Eddie.

"I heard somebody say he is the director," said Mattie, in a whisper. "He has charge of everything."

After drilling several times, being made to

walk into the make-believe church, to seat themselves, and then to walk out again, they heard some one call "Camera!" It seemed to Bobs to be a rather silly remark; but soon she discovered that it meant they were now being photographed. She caught Mattie's blue eyes upon her in a look of ecstacy.

They were in the "movies"!

But that was all there was to it! It had not given Bobs so much as a thrill. To walk in and out of what was at best only a poor and dingy imitation of a church, to be drilled with a lot of stupid people — some of them not any too clean, others altogether too friendly — and then to be photographed! She had had no chance to act, no chance to exhibit her likeness to the glorious Maid; she had only been one of a stupid, tawdry crowd, not even knowing what the scene was about.

But when that scene was over, there was to be, apparently, something really worth while. A girl who had sat beside Mattie in the "church" whispered, —

"Look! There's the star! There's Miss Blank!"

The girls looked, indeed, for Miss Blank was a favorite screen actress; it had been explained to them that she was just "finishing a picture" in the farther corner of the studio. They had expected to see the familiar radiant beauty of the screen; instead, they beheld a tired-looking woman whose eyelashes had a sort of paste on them, so applied as to appear like so many small black beads; and as she passed they heard her speak disagreeably to the maid who was carrying a tray with mirror and powder-puff — she who always looked so sweet and gentle on the screen! She passed quite near the girls, and to Bobs' horror she saw — as she could not help seeing, so obvious was it — that the gay young girl of the screen was undoubtedly a woman of forty, and that her pretty hair was not, by nature, her own!

Again that sick feeling pressed on Bobs' heart. Again her knees began to tremble.

And again — oh, horror! — the detestable young man who had touched her arm and her shoulder and called her "dearie" was seen approaching, leering at them. He winked.

Bobs could endure no more. She turned and fled, as fast as she could go, toward the dressing-room, regardless of the black coils of electric cables on the floor, regardless of the howls of men warning her "to get out of that set" — she had forgotten that "set" meant, for "movie" purposes, the setting for a scene. She dodged in and out of people and furniture, bumping into men with hammers and men with paint pots, into men in fancy costumes and men who were dressed like "real" men except for the paint and powder on their faces. She seemed to herself to be rushing from one horror into another; then, suddenly, her foot caught in a coil of rope, and she went down.

Mattie, it seemed, had done her best to keep up with Bobs in her wild flight across the enormous hall of the studio. In a moment she, and a workman or two, were lifting up the

sobbing girl. A few minutes more, and Bobs was seated on one of the wooden chairs of the dressing-room; and, as soon as she was calmer, they found their hats and coats and immediately began to put them on. But when they were ready to don their furs — disaster and tragedy!

Bobs' furs were gone!

And — oh, worse, a thousand times worse! Sybil's magnificent furs were also gone!

Search where they would, those furs were gone! To have lost her own pretty new set would have been tragedy enough for poor Bobs; but also to have lost Sybil's glorious ones, worth a small fortune, and cherished above all because dear grandfather had given them!

Oh and oh!

Bobs was too crushed, too heart-broken, too utterly ashamed and frightened, to do anything; but Mattie went in search of some one to help, and returned with the "dresser" and a couple of men. They listened to the girls' story.

One of the men asked the "dresser," "Did you see any furs on 'em when they came in?"

"I did n't notice any," the woman replied wearily. "Maybe they had 'em and maybe they did n't. But I did n't notice any."

"Oh! How can you say such a dreadful thing!" Bobs began, springing to her feet, her eyes blazing. "Do you mean to insinuate that we are not telling the truth?"

But the other man, who seemed to be in authority, spoke up. "Look here, now, you!" he said, gruffly, shaking a finger almost in Bobs' very face. "None o' that, now! We don't allow any roughness around here! And you see that sign up there? That sign says we are not responsible for valuables, don't it? All right, then! What you two want to do is to get out o' here, and get out quick! Your services won't be needed any more — see?"

He had come quite close to Bobs, and thrust his face out toward her. She drew back, gasping, and then the two men went out.

But it was not until they were back in South

Wickham that the final blow fell. The girls had found very little to say, on the way home; now they were walking silently along towards the Hendersons' house. Mattie had been looking at Bobs; Bobs knew it, all along, but the moment came when she could endure it no longer. She turned and met the gaze of those unwinking blue eyes.

"Mattie Henderson, if you don't stop staring at me —" she began; but to her surprise the blue eyes suddenly brimmed with tears.

"Oh, Beatreechy! There's something I've got to tell you, and — and — it just — nearly — k-k-kills me!"

Bobs was speechless, and Mattie took her hand out of her coat-pocket and held it out to Bobs.

"Look! You did it when you tripped and fell!"

And Bobs did, indeed, look. Then she cried out, and took in her hand the pathetic, crushed, hopelessly ruined object that Mattie was offering her.

"Somebody must have stepped on it when you dropped it," Mattie was saying. "Oh, Beatreechy, I'm just so dreadfully sorry!"

Somebody must, indeed, have stepped on it! Her wrist-watch — her precious, beautiful wrist-watch! Ruined, almost unrecognizable, and forever!

"Don't you ever dare to call me that foolish, ridiculous name again, Mattie Henderson! And don't you ever LOOK at me again!" cried Bobs.

And then she turned and ran — not as she had run in the studio, tripping and dodging, but straight and swift, to the dear brown house and the dear mother-arms and the dear eyes that rebuked and pitied and forgave all at the same time.

The doctor looked very stern when he heard the story. "I thought I could trust my daughters," he said.

"Oh, Daddy!" poor Bobs cried, and hid her face on Mother-dear's lap.

It was Sybil who came to the rescue. She

crossed the hearth-rug and put her arm through the doctor's. "Ah, no, Daddy, darling! Don't make poor Bobby feel any worse than she does! It's bad for all of us" — Sybil's eyes filled with tears, at the memory of the lost furs — "but it's much, much the worst for Bobs!"

And Mother Crawford put her hand on Bobs' bowed head. "I think we shall be able to trust our little girl hereafter, my dear," she said. Then — such an understanding person was Mother-dear! — then she asked, "Don't you think Bunny is well enough for visitors to-night, Doctor-daddy?"

The doctor, who was holding Sybil close, smiled across at his wife. "I think she might be well enough for just one visitor," said he.

And Bobs, with a sob and a little cry of joy, rushed away upstairs to her twin.

"I've promised Mother-dear not to have anything more to do with Mattie Henderson," Bobs told Bunny next day, "and Mother-dear is going down to make a call on Mrs. Hender-

son this afternoon and thank her for my visit and get my things. And, you know, Bunny, while I may *look* like Joan of Arc, I guess I'm satisfied to *be* Bobs Crawford."

"Well," said Bunny, "I guess that's just as well. I've heard that quite a number of people have looked remarkably like Napoleon, and been just ordinary men."

CHAPTER VII

BRIDE TIME

APRIL in Maryland — bride time! Spring comes in a night to the Chesapeake country, persuaded, perhaps, by the warmth of the sunlit waters and the low-lying shores; and it comes with a sudden glow of color. In a day the buds will have opened, leaves unfolded, and the daffodils in the old orchards and gardens spread themselves like sunlight everywhere.

It was on such a day of spring that the stately old mansion of Montebello was made ready for its bride. Not in four generations had a daughter of the house been married within its white walls. Small wonder, then, that every door and window had been opened wide, as if the house could not have held so much festivity and happiness.

Grinning negroes ran in and out of the back doors, subjected more or less to the bewilder-

ing commands of Sair-Ann, the turbaned ruler of the kitchen domain, and her husband, Shem. They bore into the house great masses of fruit blossoms and armfuls of daffodils and narcissuses. Down at the stable, two old colored men were washing and polishing and trimming with flowers and white ribbons the colonel's carriage, rubbing the harness, and giving a last polish to the already glistening horses.

From the stone-paved hall of the house gay chatter and laughter could be heard. An excited little lady with gray side curls fluttered everywhere among the young people, who, in turn, were busy with ladders and hammers and ribbons and ropes and flowers; and two white-haired gentlemen, who might have looked curiously alike if one had not been smooth-shaven and the other bearded, sat side by side on the davenport on the landing of the stairs, looking down on the busy scene below.

Bunny and Bobs, laughing with excitement, were working away as busy as bees, and directing every one else. Bobs, on the top of the

stepladder in the drawing-room, was fastening an enormous bow of white satin ribbon to the ceiling over the fireplace; for on the hearth of her ancestors, in a bower made by the great white marble mantel and an arch of blossoms and ribbons, Sybil was to be married that day.

"There!" said Bobs. "That is up to stay! Would n't it be dreadful if anything came down on the bride's head!"

"Oh, my dear!" exclaimed Miss Sophia, nervously wringing her hands. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

Bobs put her arm round the little lady's waist.

"Now, Cousin Sophia," she said. "What do you think of our bower?"

Hearing the question, every one from the hall came crowding into the doorway to look.

"It is lovely," said Mrs. Crawford. "I have not a suggestion to make, except that you left a hammer among the roses on the mantel, Bobs."

Every one laughed, and Bobs hastily removed the offending tool. The colonel and Mr. John had come downstairs; and Donald, too, was looking shyly into the room. Bobs and Bunny tried to drag him inside.

Molly Rutherford, who had been marking off an aisle with white ribbons, asked:—

"What do you think of it, Donald?"

"I think it's awful!" said Donald, resisting the twins with all his might, but with very slight success. They dragged him into the room before the white bower.

"Awful!" they echoed. "Awful! After all our work, and with those hundreds of roses that Grandfather sent to Baltimore for, and that lovely bank of lilies of the valley on the mantel, and all those cherry blossoms, and those yards and yards of white ribbon! Awful, indeed!"

Molly and her brother Jack and Dick and Hallam seemed greatly amused at Donald's nervousness; even Mr. John was quietly smiling; but Miss Sophia, wringing her little

hands, shook her head, and murmured, anxiously, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The colonel moved forward, and laid his hand on Donald's shoulder. "I am not too old to know just how you feel, my boy," he said.

"It's the thought of all those eyes looking at your back," said Donald.

The colonel nodded, laughing. "I know," he said. "And the having to keep step, and wondering whether you can pitch your voice loud enough to be heard and not so loud as to echo through the rooms."

"That's perfect nonsense!" cried Bunny. "I mean Donald's thinking that, Grandfather, not your saying it."

"Of course it is!" said Bobs. "As if anybody in the room were going to look at the back of a plain black cutaway when there will be me and Bunny and Molly to look at."

"And the bride," Molly suggested.

"Yes," Bunny agreed, somewhat doubtfully. "Sybil, too, of course. But brides, after all, are really more or less alike — with

their white veils and things. I don't suppose any one would deny that bridesmaids are the most important part of a wedding."

Even Donald cheered up at that remark, and the colonel chuckled with delight.

"There's not the least fear," said Bobs, "that Bunny and I will trip over our dresses. We've practiced in blankets for months."

"Yes," said Bunny, "and when Mother-dear sees how very much better we look in gowns suitable to our age, she will never have the heart not to let us have our summer dresses just as long."

"Well," said Mrs. Crawford, "in my day girls of seventeen were still children. Times change — and time flies. Do you know that in two hours the guests will begin to arrive?"

"Mercy! It will take me that long to do my hair right!" cried Bobs. "Where's Sybil?"

"She drove to the landing to meet your father," said Mrs. Crawford; and Donald, quite as if he had been watching, announced:

"Here they are now!"

Every one trooped out to the broad veranda. There was little of the appearance of a bride about Sybil, as she sprang out of the dogcart after the doctor. She was dressed in the loose tweeds that she loved to wear at Montebello; the wind had blown her curls about her cheeks, and her eyes were sparkling with the pleasure of bringing the doctor home. When the others had gone into the house again, she put her arm through the colonel's, and said to Donald, who still lingered: —

"Now, you just run along, Don. I want to talk to Grandfather."

The colonel frowned, and did his best not to appear pleased. "Talk to me! Talk to me, indeed! What's the good of talk, miss? All these weddings are very upsetting. Come downstairs in the morning — step on a cake somebody has left on the stairs! Go into the study — strips of white paper all over my table! Call Shem — can't come, busy waiting on those children! Start toward my brother John's room — fall over trunks in the hall!

No waffles for supper — no beaten biscuit — cook too busy with cakes and things! Very upsetting, very upsetting! Don't like weddings, don't like them at all!"

Sybil had drawn him, as he talked, into the farthest corner of the deserted drawing-room. "Poor darling dear!" she said. "I don't wonder at all! It *is* hard on you: and I wish I could have been married with just you and Cousin Sophia and Uncle John, and Mother-dear and Dad as witnesses. But if we had done it that way, I tremble to think what would have happened to the twins! They would *never* have recovered!"

But the colonel refused to be cheered. "And I think I have made a very great mistake," he said, "in giving my consent to your going to India! No telling what's going to happen to you. They tell me that snakes and fevers abound there. No place for a lady. Don't know what Donald 's thinking of!"

Sybil had to bite her lip to keep from laughing, yet she was near tears as well. She knew

what was in his heart; and, moved by an impulse of love and pity, she put her arms around his neck and her cheek against his.

"But Donald has to go, dear," she said. "Think what it means to his career —"

"Wild-goose chase," said the colonel. "Let 'em do without their bridges. Plenty of work in this country for any man."

"Oh, you poor old cross darling!" said Sybil.

But the colonel would not endure pity.

"Go 'way, go 'way!" he said. "Don't want to be strangled! Don't want to be choked! Don't want your pity!"

He had risen and tramped across the room toward the hall, drawing his large bandanna from his coat-tail pocket as he went. In the doorway he turned, flapped the handkerchief toward Sybil, and roared, "And it does not become you, miss, to accuse your elders and betters of being cross!"

And as she ran upstairs to dress, Sybil heard him roaring fiercely from the library, "Shem! Shem, you Shem! Sophia! So-phi-a!"

But by the time the guests began to arrive, the colonel was his most courtly self again. He stood just inside the great door of Montebello, with Mrs. Crawford on his right and Miss Sophia on his left, to welcome the guests. And when all the guests were seated, and the clergyman had put on his white robes, and every window of the drawing-room was filled with smiling brown faces, and the very pale Donald was trying to hide behind Dick in the hall behind the stairs, and Sair-Ann, in a wonderful new turban and snowy apron over a black silk dress, had come down to tell them that all was ready — then the colonel went upstairs for the pride of his heart — his darling.

Molly, Abundance, and Roberta came first, with their arms full of apple blossoms. They were wonderfully lovely and sweet, and all that a bride should have as attendants; yet it was the picture of the two who came last that impressed itself indelibly upon the hearts of those who saw it.

Smiling, beneath a veil that another Sybilla had worn, Sybil paused a moment at the head of the stairs. The colonel had refused to be coached. Who might instruct *him* in the proper manner of escorting a lady? A step or two below her, turning a little so that he might watch her face, he held out his hand. Instinctively Sybil laid her own on his palm; and so, in his good old-fashioned manner, he led her down to the white bower, and gave her to Donald.

Like a soldier he stood at his post while the guests offered their congratulations. The bride cut the first slice of cake with the old sword that "Marse Robert" had given when the colonel's own had been broken in the charge of Bull Run — a little ceremony that had been planned by Mr. John and the romantic twins. It caused the colonel to do a great deal of flapping with his handkerchief, and afterward to go off into the corner, with those of his old friends and comrades who were present, to recount old tales of those

AND SO, IN HIS GOOD OLD-FASHIONED MANNER, HE LED HER DOWN TO THE WHITE BOWER

days of their youth when "Marse Robert" had been their leader and their idol.

His old friends stood round him, too, when Sybil drove off with her husband; and, to a man, they rallied to his aid when the happy, noisy, Crawford family, departing for their home in Massachusetts, left a rather forlorn, lonely household of three old people.

"Not that I am hinting at all," said Bobs to the colonel, from the gangway of the Emma Niles, as they were leaving for home, "but if you simply cannot stand it, you know you can always send for Bunny and me."

And Bunny added, "But if you are going to be lonely, it will be just as well for you to wait until June, because Mother-dear is worrying now because we have been out of school so much this spring."

CHAPTER VIII

THE COLONEL ARRANGES THINGS

THE seeds of suggestion thus dropped in the colonel's mind grew apace. A few days after school in South Wickham had closed, a letter came from Maryland. This time it was addressed to Mrs. Crawford. It read:—

DEAR MADAM:

I am sure that as a conscientious parent you will understand and share my anxiety in regard to those two children in India. It is no place for young people to be trusted alone. I have, therefore, engaged my passage for Bombay *via* Suez. I leave New York on the 29th inst., and I dare say I can find a corner in my trunk for any message you may care to send. Now it occurs to me that Sophia and John are too old to be left alone at Montebello. I therefore venture to request that you and Robert permit those two young ladies of yours to spend the summer at Montebello. I believe them to be fully capable of handling affairs here and of meeting any emergency that may arise. If you will permit them to be at Montebello by the 25th, you will greatly oblige,

Your sincere friend and humble servant,

WILLIAM CROCKETT.

They all laughed over the letter. "Sybil and Don are too *young* to be left alone, and Cousin Sophia and Uncle John are too *old*, and *we're* old enough to look after them, and *he* is just the right age to go sailing round the world after Sybil," said Abundance.

"And he is blissfully unaware of his inconsistency," Bobs added. "But I am glad he is. Think of a whole summer at Montebello!"

More and more, as they drew nearer to Montford Landing aboard the Emma Niles were the twins of the same opinion.

"Now we know how Sybil must have felt," said Roberta, "that first time she came here."

"Well, not just exactly," Abundance replied. "For *we* know that we are going to have a gloriously good time, and Sybil did not know what she was coming to."

The colonel and his brother met them at the landing; and between that time and the day of his departure they passed many hours with him, making plans for the summer.

"The house will be left in Sophia's care, of

course," said the colonel, "but my brother John is altogether incapable of looking after the estate. My man Torm is a good enough foreman, as far as the crops go; but I can't leave a place like Montebello entirely in the hands of the colored people for one whole summer. Some one has got to poke 'em along; and when my brother John gets hold of a book, he does not know what season it is."

"We will do our very best," Abundance promised.

"But I'm afraid we don't know very much about farming," said Bobs.

"No matter," said the colonel. "Torm knows. He only has to be poked along."

Many were the directions the colonel gave them. If they had carried them all out, their days would not have had room for anything else. The old gentleman took them to every nook and corner of the big place, and before the day of his departure, he had talked and worried himself into such a state that he half regretted having planned to go at all.

He roared at every one, and forgot where he put things, and kept remembering innumerable last instructions, and, in fact, wrought the entire household into a fine state of nerves.

"It sho am a good thing master's gwine to Miss Sybil," said Sair-Ann to her husband, Shem. "Ain't nobody but Miss Sybil can manage de cunnel. He sho does need a firm hand."

Miss Sophia wept a great deal during the last day or two, and the sight of her tears did nothing to appease the colonel. "Sophia, will you behave like a sensible woman?" he thundered at the breakfast table, on the last morning.

"I dreamt of icebergs last night, brother," said Miss Sophia, mopping her eyes, and pouring the coffee into the sugar-bowl. "Icebergs — and — sh-arks!"

The memory was too much for the poor little lady, and she had to be led away from the table by the sympathetic, yet secretly smiling twins.

"Don't you let Sophia and Sair-Ann touch my guns and fishing-rods," the colonel called down to the girls from the deck of the Emma Niles. And his journey northward was broken by other "final" directions sent by telegraph from various places along the way, and delivered in a bunch the next morning, with Mrs. Crawford's daily letter and the "Baltimore Sun."

The first one they opened and read: "Have Japhet cut down Selim's oats at noon."

The second said: "Left watch on bureau. Express Donald's care, India."

The third: "Don't take oysters from bed I planted last year."

The fourth: "Don't sell the four Berkshire pigs."

The fifth: "Found watch in back pocket."

And the real "final" message came in the morning mail two days later in the form of a post-card of the Caronia, sent back by the pilot. The colonel was off for India at last, and the twins were left in charge of Montebello.

For a week or two after the colonel's departure Bunny and Bobs took their new responsibilities with great seriousness. At breakfast each morning they wore a business-like air, and immediately after they had eaten hastened away on a tour of inspection. The negroes enjoyed it immensely, but it is probable that their years of training under the colonel had more to do with the successful management of Montebello that summer than anything that was said or done by the twins.

First they would go to the stable, escorted by a barking, leaping, scrambling company of dogs. Old Japhet, who had been the colonel's coachman for fifty years, and who was still in command there, always welcomed them with scrapes and bows, and with the utmost seriousness led them from stall to stall, and consulted them on one point or another about the care of the horses. Selim and Damascus, the two splendid Arabians that were ridden only by the colonel and Sybil, were at pasture for the summer, and of course the twins had

to make daily visits, with carrots and sugar, to their paddock.

Long ago, during earlier visits at Montebello, the girls had learned to ride; now they were always ready for a gallop with their friends across country, over fences and ditches and streams, down sandy banks and through tough, scraggly undergrowth. It was not remarkable, therefore, that their tour of inspection frequently ended at the stable.

Three horses were kept for their exclusive use: Fatima for the dog-cart, Omar and Ayesha to ride.

"Dem colts jest a-eatin' dey haids off, Miss Bunny!" Japhet would say. "Pleas'm, Miss Bobby, ain't you-all gwine take 'em out for jest a li'l mite of a ride dis mornin'?"

Generally the twins thought it more imperative for them to exercise the horses than to inspect the farm, which, after all, had a mysterious way of getting along very well without them.

Once mounted, they regarded roads as of

small account. The important thing was to ride in as straight a line as possible for whatever place they purposed to favor with their presence that day; or, if they were in a wandering mood, there was always some alluring bypath to be explored.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEED OF CURIOSITY

On the farthest border of the large estate of Montebello was a little brown house where for many years Mr. John Crockett had lived with one old servant. The little place was dear to him because it had sheltered him so long, and few days passed in which he did not spend some hours in his old library there. He was dearly loved by all the young people in the neighborhood, and to the twins he remained the embodiment of romance.

"I could listen for years to Uncle John's stories," said Bobs. "I believe he knows something about every house, every crossroad, every — every — 'possum in the neighborhood!"

"I say!" cried Jack Rutherford, who was riding with the party that day. "I wonder if he knows anything about the queen's flagon?"

Jack Rutherford and his sister Molly, who

lived with their grandfather on the plantation of Fordham, near by, were the Crawfords' most intimate friends. The friendship had started when Jack and Donald were roommates at Harvard, and was sealed in the days when Molly had been Sybil's first acquaintance in Maryland. Young Dr. Jack had just been graduated from Johns Hopkins, where Dick Crawford had been working for a year, and he had kept Dick in Maryland with him for the summer. The twins had long cherished a wish that Sybil should marry Jack, and now they persisted in regarding him as a disappointed swain — an opinion of which Jack was perfectly aware, and one that afforded him endless amusement. The greatest joy of his life was to tease Bunny and Bobs; and knowing their romantic tendencies, he found endless ways of doing so.

"*What* queen's flagon?" Bunny demanded, turning in her saddle. "It sounds like a fairy tale!"

"Do you really mean that you have not

heard about that?" replied Jack. "And the haunted belfry?"

"Haunted — bel-fry —"

"Oh, well," said Jack, "you two lead such quiet lives! Of course you *would n't* be likely to have heard of *that!* Nor of the secret crypt."

"Jack," cried Bobs, "you *are* the most provoking human being!"

But Bunny's methods were wiser. She smiled at Jack, and began to talk about other things. She was never prettier than when she was dressed in the stiff white shirt-waist and soft stock that all the girls thereabouts wore for riding, when her hair was flying in gay little curls about her face, and her cheeks were bright from the exercise. It was not long before she and Jack had dropped a little behind the others, and by the time they rejoined the party Bunny knew all that Jack could tell about church and belfry, crypt and flagon.

"Oh," said Mr. John, when she asked him about it at dinner, "the old church over on the Wakefield road!" He smiled. "I think I

should have my doubts about the haunted belfry if I were you young ladies. Dr. Jack has a vivid imagination, as well as a fondness for teasing."

"But there *is* a church?"

"And a flagon? And a crypt?"

"If there is a crypt," said Mr. John, "I know nothing of it. But there *was* a flagon, and certainly there *is* a church. Not for many years has a service been held there, and since the war it has fallen into decay. All old things that are left alone fall into decay; churches and men alike become mysterious when the world has fallen into the way of passing them by."

It was obvious that some chord of painful memory had been touched; the man who had been the hermit sank into a gentle reverie that even the curiosity of the twins was forced to respect.

If there were active hours outdoors, there were quieter ones for the girls within the house at Montebello. Little Miss Sophia had

depended upon Sybil for so long, and had sought her advice about so many trivial matters, that now she was forever trotting after one or the other of the girls. It was her great delight to have young people coming to the house at all times; she enjoyed the excitement of preparing for them, and was never more happy than when they ate up all the good things she had provided. When the young men sat beside her for a chat, her cheeks would flush as daintily as in the days when she first wore blue ribbons and jasmine in her hair.

Abundance liked nothing better than to arrange some new little finery for Miss Sophia, and the two spent many hours absorbed in the mysteries of lawns and laces. Restless Bobs generally used such hours for interviewing the servants; scarcely a day passed in which she did not extract some piece of interesting information from one or another of them. Jinny, Shem, and Daniel were as open pages to her; Sair-Ann was more adroit.

One afternoon, when Bunny was upstairs

sewing, Bobs perched herself on the edge of the kitchen table, swinging her slippered feet.

"What kind of cakes are those, Aunt Sair-Ann?" she asked.

"Dem's lay-overs to catch meddlers, honey," said Sair-Ann calmly.

"Oh," said Bobs, with the feeling that she was not progressing very well. Then, "Aunt Sair-Ann, do you believe in ghosts?"

Sair-Ann banged the oven door. "Miss Bobby, ain't Miss Bunny callin' you?"

Bobs smiled, and ignored the hint. "Aunt Sair-Ann, did you ever go to the old church on the Wakefield road?"

"Mebbe I did and mebbe I did n't," said Sair-Ann.

Bobs changed her tactics. She leaned forward, and remarked in a low tone, "Aunt Sair-Ann, they tell me the belfry of that church is — *haunted!*"

Sair-Ann's face relaxed a little. "Go 'way!" she said. "Who done tole you dat?"

"And they say," Bobs went on, "that there is a secret crypt!"

"Crip? Who done crip it?" Sair-Ann demanded, greatly impressed.

"No one," said Bobs. "A crypt is a — a kind of cellar — a place — where *bones* are."

But that was too much for Sair-Ann's nerves. "You-all g'way from here," she said. "Jest g'way from my kitchen now, a-pryin' and askin' what ain't meant fo' you to know! You g'way from here, wid yo' talk about ghostes and cripses and sech like. 'T ain't f' you-all to ask and specurate about sech things as dem."

Bobs laughed merrily. "Oh, Aunt Sair-Ann," she cried, "you can't put me off that way! You *do* know something about it! Oh, do be a nice dear, Aunt Sair-Ann, and tell me!"

For a moment Sair-Ann looked almost ferocious: then a smile spread over her face, and she said, "Miss Bobby, honey, we ain't had none of dat smudge you and Miss Bunny

makes sense goodness knows how long! You reckon you 's too busy to make some to-day?"

The ruse, although transparent, was successful. Bobs laughed. "You blessed old dear," she said, "let's make the fudge, by all means! Dr. Jack and my brother Dick are coming over for supper, and they would rather have fudge than — ice-cream."

So it was that a short while thereafter the fragrance of the cooling candy lured Abundance down to the south veranda. She made herself comfortable in a hammock, while Roberta awaited the proper moment for marking the chocolate into squares. It was always Abundance who was the first to be dressed, always Abundance who, attractive and calm and cool, was ready to receive their guests; whereas poor Bobs, restless and impetuous, seemed forever to be rushing through life in a scramble.

Now she described to Bunny the recent scene in the kitchen. Both laughed merrily, and Bobs added: —

"We must certainly find that church, Bunny."

"And unless we are willing to give those boys a chance to play a joke on us, we shall have to go there when we won't be missed," said Bunny.

"Yes, and that will be a hard thing to do," said Bobs, laughing gayly, "because we *are* so popular."

But that remark, intended only for the understanding ears of her twin, cost them dear. Dick and Jack had arrived a moment before; lured through the house by the odor of the cooling fudge, they had come quietly upon the two girls just in time to hear Bobs' last remark.

As Bobs turned round, she saw Dick strike an admiring attitude in the long window that opened on to the piazza, while Jack Rutherford came forward and sank to his knees before her, with one hand on his heart, and the other gesticulating as he spoke!

"Ah, yes, they *are* so popular!" he cried,

while the twins blushed furiously. "Beloved of every one! Admired of every swain! Oh, ladies fair, which of you will bestow your lovely self upon this humble suitor, and bring that fudge with you as a dowry?"

"Ha! Say you so?" cried Dick, coming forward. "Nay! Nay, I vow! Twin buds so fair bloom not for one alone! Neither does that fudge go to one alone, not if I know it!"

"You idiots!" said Bobs, stamping her foot. "You great big idiots! I only meant —"

"Nay! Nay!" cried Jack. "I pray you, maiden, say not so. Illusion is so sweet; I pray you explain not!"

"*Oh!*" poor Bobs moaned, and turned and fled.

And Jack and Dick, howling with laughter, in which Abundance had to join, soon fell upon the pan of fudge.

CHAPTER X

A BUSINESS AFFAIR

SUMMER days pass quickly, for all their length of hours, especially when there are rides and drives, and picnics on land and water.

"Bunny," asked Bobs, sitting up in bed one morning, "how many hours are there in a day?"

Bunny laughed. "About a hundred, I think," she said, "from the amount we manage to do between dawn and dark of the moon."

"Well," said Bobs, "there will have to be a hundred and one to *this* day. I have an idea."

"Oh, Bobs, it's too early for ideas!"

"'Go to the ant, thou sluggard.' It's not too early for ideas when they are tomatoes."

"Tomatoes!" Bunny exclaimed.

"And chickens," said Bobs.

Bunny stared at her. "Are you at all feverish, sister mine?" she asked.

Bobs smiled serenely. "Thanks for your inquiry, dear," she said. "There is nothing delirious about my scheme. It is good, plain business. Come here." She scrambled out of bed and went to the window; Bunny followed her. "What 's that out there?"

"I only see the stable," said Bunny.

"And behind the stable?"

"Why, the old servants' quarters — where the negroes lived before the war."

"Precisely. A nice little row of good brick buildings that have not been used for years, just going to waste. Now, come to this window. What 's that out there?"

"I don't see anything except a field," said Bunny. "Just a plain field."

"Precisely," said Bobs again, very solemnly. "But it will not be a plain, empty field very long, if we carry out my plan. Bunny, you and I are going into business!"

Bunny was too much amazed to speak, and Bobs went on to explain: "It's the way of the times for women to go into business. I read

the other day of a countess or duchess, or something, who had opened a hat shop in London, and ever so many women run tea-rooms and things. You and I, Bunny, are going to raise tomatoes and chickens."

"Oh, Bobs," Bunny cried, "I think you are wonderful! I think you are a genius!"

"Well, I should n't say that, exactly, but I do think it is a pretty good idea. Torm said yesterday that the field was about four and a half acres. Then I figured it out,"—she took a closely written sheet of paper from the top drawer of her bureau,—"and it came to 196,020 square feet. Now, if we plant one tomato to each square foot, and every tomato plant has five tomatoes on it—I suppose they *do* have as many as five tomatoes on them, don't they?"

"Oh, I'm sure they have at least *that* many," said Bunny, round-eyed with amazement and admiration.

"Then five times 196,020—how many is that?"

Bunny sat down. "It's wealth," she said.

"And you know you don't have to do a single thing to tomatoes except put them into the ground and let them grow. That is all Hallam did to his last year, and you know how many he had from his few plants. Of course we will divide the proceeds with Grandfather, because, after all, it *is* his land! And we shall have to pay Torm's boys for sowing the seeds. But," she added, complacently, "I think we ought to clear quite a little out of it, even so."

But, alack and alas! How many golden dreams are subject to a rude awakening!

"I have no doubt," said Mr. John, when the twins had unfolded their wonderful plan, "that you *could* grow a good many tomatoes in the four-acre pasture. But — er — it seems to me — er — that you are planning a rather novel method of cultivation."

"Oh, well," said Bobs serenely, "that's nothing against it."

Mr. John smiled, and the girls went off to

interview the overseer. Torm listened in respectful silence while they unfolded their scheme; every negro on the place adored the twins, and not for worlds would Torm have hurt their feelings. He pulled his hat down over his eyes and kept his hand over his mouth.

"Yas, miss, yas, miss," he said, "I reckon we-all could raise a right smart of tomatoes in dat 'ere field, ef we had 'a' gone about it soon enough. Dis here's July."

"I suppose it *is* a little late to sow them," said Bunny, nothing daunted, "but we will just raise *late* tomatoes."

"Yas'm," said Torm, as he rubbed his head and tilted the hat still farther over his face, "but we-all don't ginerally raise up tomatoes dat-a-way. Tomatoes is got minds of their own. Yer cain't treat tomatoes common, like dey was corn, or clover, or watermelon. Tomatoes, dey have to be started in a li'l' box of dirt in the kitchen winder. And w'en dey pokes deir heads up a li'l' ways, dey has to

be sot out in ano'er li'l' box in de kitchen winder. And w'en dey gits three or fo' li'l' leaves, dey has to be sot out ag'in in ano'er li'l' box in de kitchen winder."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Bobs. "Are you perfectly sure, Torm, that you have to do all that to them?"

"Yas'm," said Torm reluctantly. "Yer cain't treat tomatoes like dey was common. Dey sho does require a powerful lot of waitin' on, like de quality."

The girls looked at each other for a while in silence. Then Bunny said:—

"Let me see! How many kitchen window boxes shall we need? One hundred and ninety-six thous—"

Torm precipitately disappeared, and the twins fell on each other's necks with stifled laughter. But such imagination as theirs was irrepressible. When they had sufficiently recovered, Abundance said:—

"Oh, Bobs, dear, don't let's go into farming! Somehow it seems so complicated."

"It does," Roberta agreed. "You never can count on the weather, anyhow! Any farmer will tell you that! And chickens are more interesting."

"Have you figured that out, too?" asked Bunny, jumping out of reach of Bobs' reproving hand.

"Oh, you need n't quote any proverbs at me," said Bobs, "for I propose to get my chickens already hatched. There must be any number of darkies round this neighborhood who would be glad to sell us some young chickens. We can start with those, and set a few hens besides."

"Well," said Bunny, "we may as well begin right away. You go tell Japhet to put Fatima into the dogcart, and I'll just run in and let Cousin Sophia know where we're going."

Five years of life with impetuous Sybil had not accustomed Miss Sophia to the alarming ways of the twins. But Mr. John, whose heart would never grow old, ended the little

lady's remonstrances with a reassuring word and his kindly smile.

"Well, now, sister," he said, "I do not believe they can get into very much trouble just driving round trying to collect chickens."

"But alone, brother!" Miss Sophia protested, and her little face wore its most shocked and disapproving expression.

"How many chickens," asked Bunny, as they drove out of the gate of Montebello, "do you think we shall need?"

Bobs considered. "Well," she said, thoughtfully, "not more than four or five hundred at the beginning, I suppose. If we get an average of ninety cents apiece for them, you can see for yourself what a nice little sum we shall have to divide with Grandfather."

"I think we may as well combine beauty with usefulness, don't you? White chickens are the prettiest. Unc' Frank's daughter, Arabella, has white chickens."

CHAPTER XI

COUNTING CHICKENS

THE lower part of Maryland has changed little, geographically, since the days when the lords proprietary rewarded their faithful followers with grants of large estates, or "manors." Montebello and Fordham, Almerrington, Mon Plaisir, Hart's Manor, Swansea, Waycliffe — one after another these great plantations lie as neighbors, still owned in most instances by the descendants of those to whom the lands were first granted. Here and there a corner may have been bequeathed to some faithful servant; here and there a "hundred" may have been divided into smaller farms; yet so few are the changes that the old names, and most of the old boundaries, remain as they were in colonial days.

The old negro, "Unc' Frank," whom Bunny had mentioned, was the owner of a little piece of land, left to him by Major Rutherford's

father in recognition of years of faithful service as slave and freedman. Arabella greeted them with smiles — that changed to an expression of amazement as they unfolded their plan.

"Land, Miss Bobby," she said, "you-all don't want to buy my chickens 'fore dey's big enough fo' de fryin'-pan!"

"That's just what we do want, Arabella," Bobs declared. "We're going into the chicken business."

"'Deed I cain't sell you-all my chickens! Ef I sell you-all my chickens now, what I'm gwine to sell come fryin'-time?"

"But," asked Bobs, "is n't it just precisely the same to you whether you sell them now or then?"

"Norm, 'cause ef I sell 'em now, dey won't be any to sell when fryin'-time comes."

In spite of all the girls could say, that was the attitude that Arabella maintained to the end. She would not sell her chickens, because it was not time to sell them! And what was

true of Arabella proved to be true of many another colored woman whom they visited that morning.

Their search led them on and on, over roads they had never explored before.

"I think," said Bunny, when they had driven about for two or three hours, and had only a dozen little, restless, frightened, feathery creatures to show for all their effort, "it will take just about as long to collect chickens this way as to set the eggs and hatch them out."

"Oh, never mind," said Bobs. "We have made a beginning, anyway. Now the thing is to get them home. Have you any idea where we are?"

They had been driving along, for half an hour or so, through a dense growth of pine and scrub-oak. There was no sign of a human habitation.

"I don't seem to remember having been over this road before," said Bunny. "Suppose we are lost!"

"I hope so," said Bobs. "Think what a good time Jack and Dick will have organizing rescue parties!"

Over the ruts of the little-used road the dog-cart rolled along. At last they came out on a level, sandy stretch of fields, over which the road was hardly more than a grass-grown path leading toward the Chesapeake. They could see the blue water in the distance. For a mile or more they drove onward before they came to the first evidence of man — a sunken cellar-way overgrown with weeds that were almost as high as the crumbling chimney.

"The land was once inhabited, anyway," said Bunny, with a nervous laugh. And a little farther on she cried, with a note of relief in her voice, "Oh, look, there 's a house!"

There was, indeed, a building of some sort in the distance; and before they reached it, they passed other ruined chimneys and tumble-down fragments of wall.

"Looks like a deserted village," said Bobs.

Then, as they drew near to the one building that still retained some measure of its original form, she cried, "Bunny! Look! It's a church! It must be —"

"The church on the Wakefield road! No wonder they say it 's haunted! It looks it!"

"That tower! And that beautiful graveyard, with all those lovely, wobbly tombstones! Oh, Bunny, we've got to go in! I simply can't *live* without exploring that church!"

Abundance grabbed her as she was about to jump from the dogcart. "Wait! I am just as much interested as you are, Bobs, and I like ghosts and tombstones as much as any one does! But if I have to go another hour without something to eat, Bobs, I shall *die!*"

Bobs laughed, and took up the reins again. "If worse comes to the worst, and we can't find our way home," she said, "we can cook our chickens."

But Fatima was apparently as well aware as the twins of approaching dinner-time, and

took matters upon herself. After a brisk trot of half an hour or so, she turned into a little wood road that the girls recognized at once as belonging to Montebello.

"I have n't the least idea how we got here," said Bobs, when they had left the dogcart at the stable and the basket of chickens in Torm's keeping, "but I am nevertheless thankful! I should have died of starvation in just one minute more."

They found Miss Sophia in a great state of excitement over their delay; and, in calming the little old lady's fears and tremors, it seemed unnecessary to mention their having stumbled upon the church.

CHAPTER XII

THE DODO

As a rule, any business enterprise undertaken by a woman would have been severely frowned upon in St. Anne's County; but all the neighbors admitted that it was well within the province of any lady to raise chickens; as a precedent, Miss Sophia mentioned the fact that her Aunt Alicia had possessed fourteen canary birds!

"And," said Miss Sophia to Major Rutherford and her brother John, "I am sure those dear little yellow chicks might almost be taken for canaries, if you kept them in cages."

Even the major joined in the advice poured out upon the twins by every one who heard of the new scheme. People laughed; but every one was willing to want what the twins wanted, to like what the twins liked, and every one was willing to help — with advice.

For several weeks the two girls were engrossed in their new venture; but by the time that their first chickens had grown from little fluffy birds to what Dick called the porcupine age, the chicken business was beginning to pall upon them.

"I feel," said Bunny, "that I am fully prepared to open a diet kitchen. I have mixed every variety of food known to man. I have weighed; I have measured; I have sifted; and I have cooked — and all for a few miserable little chickens!"

"And I," said Bobs, "could set up any day as a veterinary, specializing in chickens — provided, that is, that I should n't be expected to cure them."

"But it certainly is not altogether your fault, Bobs, dear, that so many things happen to them. I believe those chickens just invent diseases!"

"Well, anyway," said Bobs, "we'll always have the Dodo."

They laughed. They had boundless faith,

as well they might, in the survival of the Dodo.

During the first days of their venture, it had pleased Jack and Dick, and most of their other friends, to bring offerings of one or more chickens whenever they came to Montebello. Each tried to outdo the others; and a more motley crew it would have been hard to find. It was Dr. Jack who presented them with the gem of the collection.

"Far be it from me," he said, when he brought the creature, "to laud my own gift! Yet lest you fail to recognize its rarity, I feel that I must explain. The species has long been considered extinct. Not so — for one remains! This is the only surviving Dodo!"

It was a wonderful bird, a veritable caricature of a cockerel. His head was bald, his legs were very long; he had little frills of yellow feathers just above his feet; he possessed no tail to speak of, and he had a habit of carrying his wings outspread, and of scuttling about with outstretched neck, as if he had

just remembered to be in a very great hurry. As a crowning beauty, his feathers grew in all directions.

"Dat ain't a chicken," Sair-Ann said, the first time she saw it; "dat's a scarecrow. Ain't no turkey buzzard gwine to come around here whilst dat thing's in de yard!"

The Dodo looked up at her with his head on one side, and seemed from that moment to be possessed with a desire to torment Sair-Ann. From the beginning, he refused to stay with the other chickens. He grew to have a great fondness for the twins, and followed them everywhere, even into the house. The big front door of Montebello stood open day and night, and the bird made the most of the opportunity it offered.

Mr. John came down one morning with the Dodo under his arm. "I'm sure I don't know," he said mildly, "how he managed to secrete himself last night; but when I awoke this morning, our friend here was looking at me from the foot of my bed."

Another day, Mrs. Wickes, a friend of Miss Sophia, came to call; she was a very grand old lady, dignified, and a trifle pompous. She swept into the dusky coolness of the drawing-room, and sank into the cushioned depths of an armchair. But she rose with a shriek; and the Dodo, squawking loudly, with his bald head outstretched, and his queer wings beating the air, darted from the chair. He nearly tripped Miss Sophia in the doorway, flew into Jinny in the hall, and finally darted out of the front door and down the drive as if a demon cat were after him.

One day at dinner the family was somewhat startled to hear Sair-Ann's heavy tread mounting the stairs from the kitchen, while her angry voice muttered all the while.

"I jest come to tell you," she said, when she stood in the door, arms akimbo, "dat I cain't stand no mo' of dat young rooster. Day befo' yestiddy I went into de pantry for de nutmaig, an' when I come out, dat yaller imp was settin' on de edge of my mixin'-bowl,

helpin' hisself to de cake dough. Last night I was settin' in front of de oven, waitin' till it was time to set my bread to raise, an' when I got up, dere was dat chicken a-roostin' under my feet. An' what wid his screechin' an' squawkin' an' his floppin' round over de tables and cheers, he come near scarin' me into my grave. An' here jest now, soon as my back was turned, did n't dat yaller chicken start in to give hisself a bath in the boiled custard! You-all ain't gwine to have a mite of dessert dis day; an' I'm a-tellin' you right now, if dat rooster enters my kitchen ag'in, he's gwine straight into de fryin'-pan!"

But the Dodo was not the only care of the twins. Gradually the flock diminished, until at last, early one morning, they were awakened by some one knocking on the door.

"Please, Miss Bobby, please, Miss Bunny," said Jinny, "Torm done sont up to de house to say dat somebody must 'a' left de henhouse door open last night, an' he cain't seem to find any of you-all's chickens."

Sleepy-eyed, the girls looked at each other. Jinny poked her head round the door.

"Torm, he say —"

"All right, Jinny, we'll come," said Bobs. She and Abundance stared at each other in silence; then she said, "Bunny, if we stay up here long enough, perhaps Torm will get discouraged and stop hunting."

"No such luck. Torm is so conscientious. He'll hunt and hunt; and it will mean that we shall have to go on following chickens round for the rest of our days."

For a while they lay in unhappy silence. Then Bobs remarked, "Bunny, do you know, I have rather suspected, of late, that Grandfather did not really and truly expect us to manage Montebello while he was away."

Bunny looked at her twin with a quizzical little smile. "Lately," she admitted, "something of the sort has also dawned on *me!*"

Just then the voice of Jinny was heard again outside their door. "Please, Miss Bunny, *please*, Miss Bobby, Torm, he say he

cain't find nary one of you all's chickens exceptin' dis yer rooster; an' he sont him up to you, so's you would n't be worried about him."

Whereupon Jinny opened the door and put the Dodo on the floor of the room. He looked up at the girls with his head on one side, and they looked back at him.

"It's too much," said Bobs. "That bird has got on my nerves. I can't stand any more of the Dodo. Let's drive over to Fordham this morning, and give him to Arabella."

It was a suggestion that appealed to both of them, and one that they lost no time in carrying out.

"My land!" exclaimed Arabella, as Bunny handed her the covered basket, which, from the sounds that proceeded from it, might have held a family of wildcats in distress. "My land!"

But the twins did not wait to hear any more. Fatima was urged to her utmost speed.

"For," said Bobs, "if I don't get away from

the very thought of chickens, I shall simply explode into bits."

Through the pine woods to long-neglected fields Fatima trotted. "Oh, joy!" cried Bobs. "She's taking us to the haunted church! I should welcome ghosts, or graves, or secret crypts, after those dreadful chickens!"

A short while afterward, when they had left the dogcart and were prowling round the old church to see what they could discover, Bobs suddenly gave a cry of dismay:—

"Oh, Bunny, Fatima's gone!"

Where the dogcart had stood a short while before, the grass-grown road was empty. A cloud of dust in the direction of Montebello told the rest of the story.

"Marooned!" cried Bunny dramatically.

They looked at each other and laughed. "It won't kill us to walk home," said Bobs, "if they don't send out rescue parties after us, the way they do after Arctic explorers. But first we must do our part, and explore the church."

"Do you know," said Bunny, when they stood in the aisle, looking round the neglected interior, "it is n't ruined at all! A few panes of glass, a little carpentry, and a good deal of house-cleaning, and it would be all ready for services again."

"Is n't it curious," said Bobs, "that it should have been deserted in this way? It must have been beautiful. Look at that marble altar and the carving on the pulpit."

"Such a high pulpit, too! I never saw one so high," said Bunny, as they drew nearer. "Such a cunning flight of stairs!"

She mounted to the preacher's place; but Roberta, from below, had found something more interesting.

"Here 's a door," she said, "a funny little door under the pulpit. I wonder if any one ever hid in here while the preaching was going on overhead." Then, as the door opened suddenly, she cried out, "Oh, Bunny, look! Here's another flight of stairs going down!"

Bunny now was peeping over her sister's

shoulder. "Do you suppose," she said, "do you really suppose they can lead to the crypt, the secret crypt?"

"We'll soon find out," said Bobs, and she stepped down; but Bunny lingered.

"Is n't it dark down there, and —"

"Not a bit," said the voice of Bobs from below. "Come and see."

So Bunny descended. "It 's a very *nice* crypt," she said, looking round the small underground chamber. "Look at that stone altar, and all those nice little loopholes in the walls to let in the air. But there are n't any other doors! That's rather queer."

"I wish there were some skeletons — and — and mouldy parchments, and other things lying round. This crypt lacks — er — decoration."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Bunny. "I don't think I should care for the bones myself; and I don't believe I care much for crypts, anyway." From the top of the stairs came a loud bang, as if some draft of wind had violently

blown the door shut. "I'm going up," said Bunny nervously.

She mounted the winding flight of narrow steps. The door was shut — shut tight. Where was the latch? Her groping fingers found only smooth panels of ancient oak.

"Bobs," she called, "come here, will you? I can't find the door!"

So Bobs came, and felt, groped, and sounded. But the panels seemed perfectly smooth; if there had ever been a latch or knob on the door, it was gone now. They tried throwing their weight against the door, but it was firm and unyielding. Then they dug their finger nails into what they supposed was the edge of the door; but they could not move it. It was shut tight, and there was no way for them to open it!

Bunny sat down with a frightened sob.

"Don't do that!" said Bobs, sharply. "There must be a way out."

She ran down the steps again and along each wall. There were small spaces here and

there between the stones, opening above-ground, left apparently, as Bunny had suggested, to give air and light to this little underground room beneath the floor of the chancel; but of any other door there was no sign whatever.

Once more Bobs mounted into the space beneath the pulpit. Once more she pressed and sounded everywhere, over every inch of surface, with no better success than before. The door could be opened only from without.

Bobs could feel the pounding of her heart as she put her arms round Bunny, who was now sobbing audibly. Through the slits in the wall they could see the bright day outside; a lizard peeped out of a crack in the wall, and returned to his housekeeping. Bunny sobbed on, and Bobs sat beside her, staring at the four stone walls covered with dust and lichen.

They had told no one where they were going. They had not mentioned having seen the

church. Fatima and the dogcart were no longer in the road outside, to guide rescuers to them. There was no way of making themselves heard; no one knew where they were; and they were locked in the crypt!

CHAPTER XIII

LOST

DINNER at Montebello was served at the traditional hour of two; Shem always announced it on the second stroke of the clock that stood on the dining-room mantel. If there were guests or casual visitors, all were welcome; if any member of the household did not appear in the dining-room, the colonel — or, in the colonel's absence, Mr. John — would send Shem or Jinny to knock at the door of that person's room. Then the meal would proceed, for it was assumed that whoever did not come to dinner was dining elsewhere.

Thus it happened that on the fateful day when the twins were locked in the crypt of the church on the Wakefield road, no one at Montebello was made at all uneasy by the absence of the girls from dinner. Mr. John, indeed, asked Shem: —

"Where are the young ladies? Have you been to their room?"

And Shem replied, "Dey done drove off in de 'rection of Fordham dis mornin', sir," an assertion that naturally set all qualms at rest.

As the afternoon shadows lengthened on the grass, Miss Sophia became uneasy, and pattered restlessly about the house.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she kept saying to herself. "It does seem very strange! It is not like Abundance to stay away without a word, when she promised to go with me to call on Mary Lou Marshall this afternoon!"

But Mr. John had taken his way to the Hermitage, the little brown house that still sheltered his books; and there was no one either to reassure Miss Sophia or to share her anxiety.

Late in the afternoon, Richard and Jack Rutherford cantered up the drive. "Molly wants the girls to come over to supper and spend the evening, Cousin Sophia," said Dick.

"She is planning a moonlight straw ride. The Nicholsons are coming, and a lot of others."

Miss Sophia clasped her hands together and began to tremble. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she cried. "It is very strange! The girls went off this morning, without saying a word to me. I thought, of course, they were at Fordham. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I'm quite sure something awful must have happened!"

But Dick shook his head and laughed. "Something is always happening to the twins, Cousin Sophia," he said, "but never anything to worry about."

And Jack Rutherford added, as they rode away:—

"Oh, they're all right, Miss Sophia. If they're not at Fordham, they are somewhere else in the neighborhood. They'll turn up for the straw ride to-night, never fear."

When Mr. John returned at supper-time, he found his sister in a tremor of uneasiness.

"There, there, Sophia!" he said, patting her on the shoulder. "I have no doubt what-

ever that the girls are safe; but if it will make you feel any better, we'll just send Torm over to Fordham and find out. They have probably been spending the day with some of the young people in the neighborhood, and have gone with the others on that straw ride."

But when good, reliable Torm came up from the stable, in response to Mr. John's message, he wore an anxious expression.

"Marse John," he said, "Japhet jest done told me Fatima brought de dogcart back empty dis mornin'."

"What 's that?" Mr. John asked sharply.

"Yassir," said Torm. "Japhet, he say he did n't think nothin' of dat, 'cause de young ladies often sends Fatima down to de stable fum de house by herself. Japhet, he say—"

"Saddle Omar!" Mr. John cried, in a sharp tone. "Ride as fast as you can to Fordham. If the young ladies are there, come back and tell me, and lose no time about it. If they are not, tell the major what you told me, and ride back here for orders. Now, jump!"

Then Mr. John sent Miss Sophia to the room in Jinny's care; he told Sair-Ann to search every corner of the house, and to keep the kettle boiling. He sent Shem to the boat-house, to see whether any of the boats were missing, and had every horse in the stable saddled or harnessed, every man on the place mustered to await Torm's return, so that, if the news were bad, no time should be lost in searching every road, every house, every piece of woods in the neighborhood. Supper was forgotten; the negroes were standing in an excited group near Mr. John on the steps of the "great house" when Torm returned, pounding up the drive as fast as Omar could bring him.

"Oh, my glory, Marse John!" he cried, shaking with excitement, as he swung off the steaming horse. "Dey ain't dere! Ain't nobody seen 'em! Dey ain't nobody set eyes on our young ladies!"

There was a clamor of excited cries and exclamations from the negroes, and Mr. John

swayed, and reached toward one of the big pillars for support; but almost instantly he recovered his self-control, and began to issue sharp orders to the men. Just as the last negro was turning away on his appointed errand, three horsemen came racing up to the house.

"No cause for alarm, John," said Major Rutherford, clasping his old friend's hand. "It's just some prank of those young monkeys. They will bob up serenely before we know it."

"I sincerely hope so," said Mr. John, in a tone in which there was very little sound of hope.

Dick, too, tried to reassure himself and the others with such words as he had spoken to Miss Sophia earlier in the day; yet, try as they would, none of the four really succeeded in hiding their anxiety.

They decided that Jack and Dick should command the parties from Montebello and Fordham, and that Major Rutherford and Mr. John, in the dogcart, should drive far and

wide to the houses of their friends, to beseech every one to send out searching parties.

Three times before midnight a different horse was put into the dogcart. First Fatima, and then two others were driven to such a point of exhaustion that the old gentlemen were forced to borrow another horse from the friend at whose house they chanced to arrive.

The old gentlemen often passed searching parties on the road, but they stopped only long enough to make sure that there was no news of the twins. Often a light, swaying like a will-o'-the-wisp in the distance, showed where the men were searching. Little owls quavered out their mournful calls; now and again a dog barked, disturbed by the unusual commotion. Still the anxious search went on, and still there was no sign of the twins.

At last Major Rutherford turned to his companion, and said, "John, I think I'll get that old boatman of mine, Uncle Frank, to poke round the shores on the waterside."

Mr. John's head sank a little lower on his breast. "I've been thinking of that," he said.

In silence the major drove to Frank's little cottage, on the border of Fordham. No sooner had they stopped in front of the gate than Mr. John sprang to his feet, grasped the major's shoulder with one hand, and pointed excitedly with the other.

"Look!" he cried. "Look there, there's that rooster! The girls took him with them this morning! They are here! They must be here!"

Sure enough, perched on the rail of the porch, with one foot drawn up comfortably under him and his bald head on one side, looking at the disturbers with a sleepy eye, was the Dodo!

Major Rutherford sprang from the cart, and began to pound upon the door and to shout. Arabella poked her head out of a window, and Frank himself came running round from the back of the house with a lighted lantern in his hand and a dog at his heels.

"Yassir," said Arabella, in reply to the ex-

cited questions of the two gentlemen, "de young ladies brought me dat rooster dis mornin' in a basket, an' he was a-squawkin' an' a-squirmin' some'n' dreadful! Den dey drove off like dey was in a hurry."

Frank turned to his daughter in anger. "Why did n't you tell me dat before, you Arabella?" he demanded.

"Which way did they go?" asked Major Rutherford sharply.

"No ways in particular, sir," said the trembling Arabella. "Dey jest went on down de road, lickety-split."

"Come!" cried the major, starting toward the dogcart. "Frank, go ahead with the lantern."

But old Uncle Frank had ideas of his own. "Please, sir, major," he said, "please, sir, jest wait a minute!" Then he turned to Arabella. "What dat rooster come hyer in?" he asked.

"De young ladies brung him in a basket," Arabella replied, "and he was a-squawkin' and a —"

"You go git dat basket," Frank com-

manded. And when Arabella's head had disappeared from the window, he turned to the two gentlemen.

"Major," he said, "an' Marse John, ef you will jest leave it to ol' Frank, he'll find de young ladies, sho. I got de grandest houn' dog in de county. Dat's him a-squattin' down yonder. He don't look like much; but dat dog's got a nose what can follow any 'possum dat ever clumb a tree."

Major Rutherford frowned impatiently.

"Nonsense, Frank!" he said. "We can't waste time on child's play."

"Please, sir, major, dat dog's a jew'l. Dat's what de colonel say last time we-all went out after 'possum. He say, 'Frank,' he say, 'dat dog of yours is a wonder. He's a jew'l,' an' dat's what we calls him. 'Jew'l.' Please, sir, let me jest try him! "

Mr. John had been looking at the dog. "He's got some bloodhound in him," he said, "and everything else has failed, Tom."

"Hyer's de basket," said Arabella, dropping

it out of the window, "an' dar's one of Miss Bobby's handkerchiefs, what she tied de lid down wid."

Major Rutherford turned away. "Come on," he said, and got into the dogcart.

It was a strange little procession that set off down the road. The old negro, with a lantern in one hand and a basket in the other, talked to his mongrel dog, and encouraged him to search the road; following them came the dog-cart, drawn by a tired horse, carrying two anxious, white-haired men.

The road led straight on through the woods and out upon the fields. Now and again Frank called in the dog.

"Come here, Jew'l, come an' take a sniff of dis handle! Put your nose on dis handk'cher! Now, hunt, Jew'l, sick 'em! Search 'em out! Find 'em, Jew'l!"

The dog knew what was expected of him. He ran from side to side of the road with nose to the ground, but he found no trail. Over the fields they went, past the sunken cellars

with their sentinel chimneys, beyond which they caught a glimpse of the moonlit waters of the bay.

Suddenly, so suddenly that the tired horse jumped, and brought the two men leaning forward excitedly, so suddenly that the sound rang out through the night like a sinister warning, the hound gave voice.

Running slowly, his nose in the air, baying now and then, Jewel was doing his best to prove worthy of his name. Then, at the corner of the ancient churchyard, his nose went down to the earth, he whined, and began to run back and forth in the grass. Then he bayed joyfully.

Followed closely by the three men, he sped into the graveyard, led them in and out among the sunken graves and tottering tombstones, then round the church; and at last, with his head in the air, he sat down before the door, and gave that succession of joyful bays with which a hound tells that he has run his quarry to earth.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CRYPT

AND what of the twins, while the shadows were lengthening, while the sun set, while the moon rose, while the hours slowly crept by, and one day passed into another?

At first, Bunny had cried; but it is altogether against the nature of a girl of seventeen, and a Crawford twin at that, to weep forever. After half an hour or so, she had dried her eyes and looked up at Bobs. No matter how great the calamity, they would not meet it with tears and trembling.

So Bunny looked at Bobs, and Bobs looked at Bunny; and then, with one impulse, they began to laugh, and laughed until the stone walls echoed. That laugh helped matters tremendously.

"Did n't people use to go 'way off in the desert and fast?" asked Bobs.

"And did n't Parsifal, and Galahad, and

ever so many others spend the night in a church before setting off on anything particularly perilous?" asked Bunny.

"And think how slender we shall be after this — er — diet!"

"Oh, my goodness!" said Bunny, with a little sigh. "Sair-Ann has made apple dumplings for dinner to-day, with lots of hard sauce!"

"Oh, don't!" cried Bobs. Then she added: "But anyway, the worst is right *now*. I could n't be any hungrier than I am this minute!"

After a while Bunny asked, "Do you suppose they will send rescuers after us?"

"Of course they will," said Bobs. "You don't suppose two such nice people as you and I could disappear off the face of the earth like this without causing just one little ripple of excitement, do you?"

"No, I suppose not," Bunny admitted. "But I'd just as soon cause the excitement some other way. I think we were just a little bit stupid, don't you?"

"Perfect idiots," said Bobs cheerfully; and they laughed again.

It was some hours later when Bunny remarked, "It gets dark in here awfully early, does n't it?"

Bobs did not reply. Conversation languishes between people who are locked up in the crypt of a deserted church, miles from anywhere. And it was quite true that darkness came early in that place. By the time the birds were twittering over their supper, the little underground room was black.

With the coming of night came also strange, unaccustomed noises. Was that the falling of a twig, or the step of some wild thing? Was that a breath outside, or only the sunset breeze? Was that something moving overhead, or was it only the creaking of the old oak floor?

"Of course there are not really any such things as ghosts," Bunny whispered. Again Bobs did not reply; there really did not seem to be anything to say.

Something blacker than the darkness flew past them. For a moment they held their breaths; they felt curiously cold. They grasped each other, trembling. Again the thing flew past.

"It's only a bat," said Bobs, who was the first to recover her voice. Yet that fluttering black thing, beating about through the deeper blackness, was scarcely less terrible than if it had, indeed, been a creature of another world.

From somewhere far overhead, there quavered out on the still night air a mournful wail. Once again the weird cry rose and fell.

"Oh, I can't stand it!" cried Bunny. "I just can't *stand* it!"

"That 's only an owl, you goose!"

"I don't care *what* it is! I simply *cannot* bear to hear that cry again!" And, as the hoot owl called plaintively once more, Bunny pressed her hands tightly over her ears.

"Goodness!" said Bobs. "It is pretty bad. is n't it? I wonder if we could frighten it away by making a noise?"

"Let 's try," said Bunny, "and perhaps some one will hear us."

At the top of their young lungs they screeched, but the result was not satisfactory.

"What was that thing outside?" said Bobs. For startled, doubtless, at the unaccustomed sound, some little wild thing had squeaked and scampered about in the dry grass outside the nearest loophole.

"I think we had better keep quiet," said Bunny.

Thereafter the two sat in silence, finding what comfort they could in each other's arms. The minutes dragged along slowly; the night seemed interminable. At last the girls dozed.

Suddenly they jumped to their feet, trembling, shaking with fright and horror.

"What is it?" whispered Bobs.

And Bunny whispered, "Hush, oh, hush!"

So, standing with their arms round each other, shuddering, trembling, they listened to the baying of the hound. It seemed to be a sound that they had never heard before. Its

note of sinister warning was as terrifying as if they were fugitives from justice, and this were the triumphant call of the captor.

Nearer and nearer it came, and at last ended in a culmination of horror that was really the good dog's song of joy. Poor Bunny sank to the ground, terrified, but Bobs, whose senses were made all the more keen by her fear, thought she heard the voices of human beings.

"We are here, we are here!" she cried, and groped her way up the steps in the darkness. Then, with all her strength, she pounded and banged and kicked against the treacherous panels of the secret door.

The three men, closely following the dog, heard Roberta's first call.

"I done tol' you he'd find 'em!" cried old Frank, as he pushed open the door and rushed into the church with his lantern. After that, it was only a matter of a few moments to trace the sound of Roberta's voice to the pulpit, to find the small fastening of darkened brass, to open the door.

What excitement there was when the rescuers and the rescued arrived at Montebello! How Bunny and Miss Sophia wept and laughed on each other's shoulders! What terrible things Dick began to say to his sisters, when, white and haggard, he and Jack came flying back as fast as their weary horses could bear them, to make sure that the good news was really true! And how sternly Sair-Ann intervened, saying:—

"Dis ain't no time to scold dese po' li'l' lambs! Nor it ain't no time for dem to be out of bed! You-all better go 'long home! We's had enough to stand dis day widout your 'Why'n't you do dis?' an' 'Wot fo' you done dat?'" Then, with a sudden change of voice and manner, she said to the twins, "You jest come along upstairs, my lambs, an' let yo' mammy tuck you into bed!"

CHAPTER XV

A NEW PLAN

Of course, after such an experience, Bunny and Bobs were for a while more than ever the center of attraction. The older people in the neighborhood came to inquire whether they were any the worse for their experience, and the younger ones to hear all about it. Letters of remonstrance and reproof came from their father and mother; in fact, nothing except Mr. John's pleas and their own promises to be more careful in the future kept Dr. Crawford from commanding them to return. So, although they felt for a time like heroines of romance, they were, after all, somewhat sobered by their experience.

Uncle Frank took great satisfaction in the night's adventure, especially in the part that "Jew'l" had played in it. Over and over the old negro narrated to the excited colored people the tale of the rescue; and with each tell-

ing, the story grew in length and interest, until, before the summer was over, the girls had been lost for days, and Jew'l had picked up their trail at Arabella's very door, and leading the rescuing party at breakneck speed all the way, had arrived at last just in time to save the young ladies from dying of starvation!

"Jest look at dat dog," old Frank would say, "settin' dar, listenin' to eb'ry word I say. Maybe you t'ink he cocks his haid up dat way 'cause ob de collar wid his name on dat Marse Jack give him as a reward? No, sir! Dat dog did n't need no collar to mek him cock his haid up wid pride! Dat dog knows what he done as well as you an' me, an' I reckon dey ain't ary soul but what'll admit *now* dat ol' Jew'l's de best coon dog in dis yer county, an' de best coon dog ever was, an' de best coon dog dere ever *will* be!"

A small event frequently brings larger ones in its train. Until the twins rediscovered in so dramatic a manner the church on the Wakefield road, the old building had been

neglected, almost forgotten, for years. Now every one drove out to see it.

"John," said Major Rutherford, one day, "it seems too bad that old St. Anne's should be left to go to rack and ruin. Why, every name in the county is represented in that old churchyard."

"True," said Mr. John. "It should be preserved as an historic monument, if for no other reason. Since the night we had that big scare, I have been thinking that I should like to fix the old place up, and get the bishop to come down and — well — start things going again."

"Capital idea!" the major exclaimed. "We 'll all have a hand in it."

Mr. John shook his head. "Better leave it to me, Tom. I should like to do it. All the rest of you have your homes, and young people round you. An old chap like me has nothing but his books and a dog or two. I should really enjoy restoring the old church to something of its former state."

Major Rutherford's eyes seemed suddenly to trouble him; at any rate, he was shutting and opening them very fast as he laid his hand on the shoulder of his old friend, and said: "All right, John, all right!"

But Mr. John's gentle tranquillity was undisturbed. He went on, musingly: "It is well worth restoring, that old church. It played a large part in the development of the colony."

"Please tell us about it, Mr. John," Molly Rutherford begged; she and the twins had been listening with interest to the conversation.

"Well," said Mr. John, "that little deserted hamlet was the first abiding-place on these shores of the Maryland colonists. Those were their homes; that was their place of worship. They were the most fortunate of all the early settlers. The Indians round here were peaceful, friendly creatures, wholly unlike their Northern brethren. The climate was mild, the land fertile, and the waters of the great bay teemed with food. Except for a quarrel

with a handful of white men who had settled hereabouts before their coming, the days of the Marylanders were peaceful and crowned with plenty."

"Not much like the New England colonists," said Bobs. "Our forefathers were killed by the Indians, and scalped and carried off to Canada, and had all sorts of dreadful things happen to them."

Mr. John nodded. "True," he said. "And while all that was happening in the North, the ministers of this little church of ours had nothing more exciting to record in the calf-bound registers than a goodly succession of births, deaths, and marriages. Possibly it was because they had nothing better to do that they were so careful with their records; those church registers were a history of the colony, from its first settlement until our rector went as chaplain with the army of Northern Virginia in '62. The disappearance of the records was a great historical loss."

"Who lost them?" Bobs asked.

"Ah, my dear, if we knew who lost them, we should doubtless know more."

"Do you mean they 've really disappeared?"

"I do," said Mr. John. "All the records, all the silver, everything in the church of value disappeared during the war."

"But I thought there was no fighting or pillaging in this county!" Bunny exclaimed.

Mr. John's face wore the look of sadness that the memory of those days always gave him. "No," he said, "there was no — fighting — here." And his eyes seemed all at once to become a little misty.

Major Rutherford stood up, as if he, too, were moved by that memory. "No fighting," he said, "but everything else that war brings." Then he laughed. "I guess all of us remember old Uncle Frank's yarn of my sister Fanny's buried silver, don't we?"

The others laughed with him, and Molly said, "Perhaps the church's treasure was buried, as Aunt Fanny's was! I wonder if

Uncle Frank could not find another 'diviner' to take us to the place!"

They laughed; and Mr. John said, as he and the twins went toward their carriage, "There's a fine mystery for these young ladies to unravel, at any rate."

"No, I thank you!" cried Bunny. "I don't seem to be so thirsty for mysteries as I once was. I suppose it's age creeping on." For the twins, rapidly approaching their eighteenth birthday, were beginning to dwell upon thoughts of age.

"Don't forget," Molly called after them, as the carriage started off, "that we are going to picnic in Uncle Frank's boat on Thursday!"

The girls waved back merrily; and as they drove out of the Fordham gates, Bobs said, with a smile of mischief: —

"It 's amazing how popular we have been since our adventure in the church. Nothing like being a heroine if you want to have a good time."

Mr. John's eyes twinkled; but he remarked,

"There are certain forms of —er — heroism that in my young days, young woman, would have been rewarded with a spanking, or a dose of solitude flavored with bread and water."

Bobs shook her head with mock solemnity. "Is n't it too bad that times have changed!" she said demurely.

CHAPTER XVI

UNCLE FRANK SPINS A YARN

BUT in spite of her earlier protestations, Bunny still continued to be excited by anything that contained an element of mystery. Consequently, she was quite ready to listen when, on the morning of the picnic, Bobs asked, casually, "Bunny, about that old silver stuff, it would be rather good fun to find it and restore it to the church, would n't it?"

"How?" Bunny demanded.

"Oh," said Bobs, rather vaguely, "there must be ways, you know."

"Um-hum!" said Bunny. "We might go to Mr. Macbeth's three witches, and say, 'Fair ladies, will you please bring together from the corners of the earth the ashes of the papers and the bits of molten metal that were once the treasures of old St. Anne's.' "

Bobs tossed her head. "Oh, very well," she

said. "Be as funny as you like. Perhaps *I'll* do the smiling later on."

Bobs trudged joyfully down to the boat-landing with a basket on one arm and a sailor-man's waterproof coat on the other; Bunny, as pretty as a rose in her spotless white, walked between Dr. Jack and her brother Dick. When they reached the boat, Bunny arranged herself comfortably in the bow; Bobs took her chosen place at the tiller, even though in the stern there was no one to talk with except Uncle Frank. Bobs loved to feel the boat respond to her touch as it swiftly cut through the water.

There had been a time when the old boat-man used to say, "Jest ease her off a little, please, Miss Bobby," or, "You might p'int her up a little, Miss Bobby, please, miss." But that day had long gone by. Now, when Bobs' hand was on the tiller, Frank had little to do except to balance himself on the gun-wale, and squint at the sun, or watch the western horizon for thunderclouds. At such

times, virtually alone with Bobs, old Frank was at his best as ballad-singer and teller of tales.

"Uncle Frank," Bobs asked to-day, when she had brought the Blue Wing up into the wind, "did you ever hear what became of the silver from old St. Anne's?"

But the thought of hidden treasure did not appeal to Frank. He only pulled his old hat farther down on his forehead, and muttered, "Norm."

Bobs smiled. "They tell me that old church has stood there for years and years."

Uncle Frank shut one eye and squinted up at the sun.

"There never was any fighting round here," said Bobs again, "so I suppose that is why there are no interesting stories."

"Who say dey ain't been any fightin'?" Frank demanded.

"Oh, every one knows that," said Bobs, pretending to be quite unaware of Frank's growing interest in the subject.

"Den dey knows what ain't so," said Frank, pushing up from his forehead the old wide-brimmed straw hat. The angle at which Uncle Frank's hat rested on his head always indicated his mood. "Course dey was fightin' round hyar! Mo' fightin' dan any one could shake a stick at!"

Bobs observed the position of the hat. "Well, that's what they tell *me*," she said.

"Who done tol' you dat?" Frank demanded. "Because whoever tol' you dat must 'a' forgot about Cap'n Cornwallis!"

"Ah," said Bobs, and her thoughts instantly reverted to that page of her history whereon the vanquished British general was seen surrendering his sword to the victor of Yorktown.

"Yas'm, dey must 'a' forgot about Cap'n Cornwallis for sho," said Uncle Frank. "'Cause Cap'n Cornwallis, he fit an' he fit, twell he could n't fight any more, 'cause dey were n't nary soul left to fight with!"

"Mercy!" said Bobs. "How dreadful!"

"Yas'm," said Frank impressively. "And it was right on de selfsame waters we-all are sailin' over dat Cap'n Cornwallis fit."

Bobs thought she knew her history better than that. "Oh, not on the water, was it, Uncle Frank?" she asked. "I don't think Cornwallis ever fought on the water, did he?"

"Yas'm," said Frank positively. "Dat's jest whar he did fight, right on de water of dis very bay, an' dis is de way it happened. Marse William Clayborne, he had a li'l' house an' a li'l' barn an' some cows an' some sheep over yonder on Kent Island; an' some of his friends what come up hyar from Virginia with him, dey had some more li'l' houses an' some cows an' some sheep alongside of his'n over yonder on Kent Island. Dese gemmen used ter set a whole lot of li'l' traps out in de woods an' along de cricks, for to catch de squirrels an' de paddletails, an' all de other li'l' animals, an' dey used to sell de skins of de li'l' animals what dey cotched in de traps, an' get a whole heap of money for 'em. Yas'm. An' when

Cap'n Cornwallis come out hyar to Wakefield, an' look over yonder to Kent Island, an' see Marse William Clayborne an' de other gemmen wid dey nice li'l' houses an' nice li'l' barns an' dey cows an' dey sheep, an' when he hyar tell about how much money dey had tied up in de toes ob dey stockings, he done planted his foot in de biggest canoe he had, an' sailed over yonder to Kent Island; an' 'thout as so much as a 'Howdy,' or 'By yo' leave,' or 'Hope I sees you well,' de cap'n he shake his fist in de air, an' he say, 'Listen to de words I'm tellin' you! Dis yer island's mine, an' you-all kin jest clare off'n it as quick as you kin!'"

No one who knew old Uncle Frank was ever willing to miss one of his "yarns"; and consequently, Bunny and the others in the bow of the boat, hearing his voice raised in his own peculiar singsong, came quietly aft.

"And Marse William Clayborne, he shake his fist back at de cap'n, an' make de response, 'Dis yer Kent Island is jest as much

mine as it is yours! Hyar I come first, an' hyar I'se gwine to remain!' An' wid dat, he turn his back, an' tromped away, an' left de cap'n dere on de shore a-goin' on some'n' awful.

"I reckon every one knows dat dey's three kinds of mad in dis world. Dey's de kind of mad dat stays inside of you an' burns an' squizzles twell everything looks like it's hind part befo'. An' dey's de kind of mad dat pops out all of a suddent, an' hits ker-splunk on jest whatever happens to be around. And dey's de kind of mad what's cotchin'. Dat kind spreads from one man to another man, and from de other man to another man, an' so on, twell befo' you know it, every one's mad, an' den dey's gwine to be trouble for sho! An' dat's de kind of mad Cap'n Cornwallis brung home wid him from Kent Island.

"'T wa'n't more'n a week or two befo' every one in Wakefield was jest b'ilin' mad at de folks on Kent Island. An' dat's how come dey sot sail in two canoes and a schooner, meanin' to snatch Marse William Clayborne

an' his friends out of dey li'l' houses on de island. Marse William Clayborne he saw 'em comin'; and he say, 'Come on! We'll meet 'em on de water, whar dey cain't run away!' He was jest as mad as the cap'n was.

"Dat's how come de men from Kent Island an' de men from Wakefield met out yonder on de waters of de bay. Dey fit an' dey fit, from sunup till moonrise, an' by dat time de men from Kent Island was glad to set foot on de mainland an' run for dey lives; an' dat's jest what dey did. Dey run an' dey run an' dey run, wid Cap'n Cornwallis at dey heels; an' ef it had n't been dat dey knew whar dey was a cave dey could hide in, I reckon dey would be a-runnin' yit. Yas'm!"

The story held them all breathless, and for a moment or two no one spoke, but then they all had something to say at the same time.

"Is it really true?"

"I say! That must have been a rattling good fight! Can't you just see —"

"But I never heard that!"

"Of course not! He's got the names wrong! Cornwallis was never up here!"

"No, he could n't have been! And, besides, Cornwallis was n't in the navy, was he?"

But such criticisms old Frank would not endure. "Who say Cap'n Cornwallis wa'n't hyar?" he demanded. "Who say dey was n't ary fight out hyar on de bay? Who say de men from Kent Island did n't run, an' run, an' run an' hide in a cave, when I kin take you to de very cave what dey hid in? Huh?"

"Oh, Uncle Frank," Bobs cried eagerly, "do you suppose that cave —"

But whatever she had to say remained for the time being unspoken. Suddenly, from under their feet, there arose such a succession of cries and squawks and flappings that they all sprang up in alarm and amazement. Bunny even jumped upon a seat, although those sounds could never have come from a mouse. Frank alone remained calm.

"Lands! Ef I did n't come nigh forgittin'! Arabella, she say dat bird done fit wid ebery

other cock on de place, an' peck at de hens twell dey's afraid to come home to roost. An' Arabella, she say she's jest as much obliged, but she reckon you-all better find dat rooster another home."

Whereupon Frank lifted the grating over the little cockpit where he kept his oyster tackle; and with a squawk that surpassed all his previous efforts, with his bald head on one side, and with injured dignity expressed in every ruffled feather — out walked the Dodo!

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT CAME FROM GETTING READY FOR THE BISHOP

THE merry days of summer sped by, and weeks passed into months before the twins realized that very soon they must return to South Wickham.

A letter from the colonel first made them realize that the summer had almost gone — a letter that had been written to Dr. Crawford, and forwarded to the twins in one of the letters from home. Sybil and Donald were well, and seemed quite reconciled to passing the winter in India. But to the colonel, India was a land of abomination, a land where even the cook and the house boy were called by names unheard of, and where not even Sybil's care and attention could make the old gentleman as comfortable as he would be at home. Yet it was not for that reason that the colonel would sail from Bombay in late September, but be-

cause he could not leave his brother and sister alone at Montebello during the winter; for, although one was his twin and the other some years his junior, he persisted in regarding them as old and decrepit. He besought Dr. Crawford to permit the girls to remain in Maryland until his own return — a request that reminded the twins that they would have been going back to Massachusetts within a week had it not been made.

"But we could not possibly have left before the dedication of the church," said Bunny. "You could never have entertained the bishop without us, could you, Uncle John?"

Mr. John smiled; but Miss Sophia and humor were as utter strangers as ever.

"Oh, my dear!" the little lady protested. "We have always been able to entertain bishops at Montebello — and other gentlemen as well! Why, Mr. Jefferson told my grandmamma that he considered it an honor to be asked to dinè here; and the Chief Justice, Cousin John Marshall —"

"Quite true, sister," Mr. John interrupted with his quiet smile; and added, "We must n't forget that the bishop is fond of gumbo soup."

Immediately Miss Sophia's face took on a look of preoccupation. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she said. "I wonder if Cousin Talcott Williamson has any terrapin in his pen! I'm sure I don't see how we can have the bishop to dinner without terrapin!" And the little lady trotted away to dispatch Torm on commissary errands.

The result of Miss Sophia's anxious efforts was that every "big house" in the neighborhood contributed something to the good gentleman's entertainment. The terrapin came from Cousin Talcott; Cousin Fanny Buchanan sent over the pan of Ratcliffe rusk, Miss Ann Magruder the pickled oysters, Mrs. Hollyday Kennard the Martynia pickle and white fruit cake; and the twins, not to be outdone, offered to sacrifice the Dodo bird. But that offer Sair-Ann indignantly refused.

Domestic affairs usually appealed to Bunny;

but a few days before the church was to be dedicated, she said, "Bobs, if Aunt Sair-Ann asks me to beat any more eggs, I shall disgrace Mother-dear's bringing up by throwing them out of the window! Let 's go for a sail."

"I know something better than that," said Bobs, as they started off to the boathouse. "Do you remember that yarn of old Frank's about the fight—"

"And a cave. Of course I do!"

So it was with minds and hearts set upon one and the same thing that they sprang into the little sailboat, pushed off from the landing and sailed toward Fordham wharf, where Frank was usually busy with one or another of those tasks that seem so important to a sailor, and to a landsman so mysterious.

But before they rounded the point of the orchard, there was an exclamation of impatience from Bunny and a bubbling laugh from Bobs; for the Dodo had followed the girls down to the wharf, and, unseen, had hopped aboard.

"Just look at that bird," said Bunny. "He's as much at home roosting on the edge of the boat as he is in — Sair-Ann's kitchen. Scat! Shoo! You horrid rooster! Go away!"

The Dodo only squawked and moved along sidewise, out of reach. Bobs, already in her accustomed place at the tiller, laughed.

"He's not so bad, Bunny, except for his bald head. He's really growing up quite nicely. If we could only get him a feather wig, he would n't be such a bad-looking bird — would you, Dodo?"

She flapped the end of the sheet toward him. The rooster was subject to unexpected attacks of nerves. Seeing the rope whipped out in his direction, he squawked, flapped his wings, and went overboard.

The girls sprang to their feet; but their alarm was groundless. A bedraggled mass of feathers flew aboard again — somewhat nearer the stern, but most undeniably safe.

"He has nine lives," Bobs laughed.

"Ninety," said Bunny, with a sigh.

They found Uncle Frank pottering over his oyster tongs. "Cert'n'y I kin," he said emphatically when Bobs had expressed her doubts as to his really being able to lead them to the cave where the men from Kent Island had hidden. "Cert'n'y I kin."

"How long has it been since you were there?" Bunny asked.

"How long sense I was dar? Dat ain't got a mite to do wif it. I knows whar dat cave is same's I knows whar my own house is."

"Well," said Bobs, "it is too bad that you are so busy this morning. If you had n't so much to do, you might take us to the cave."

At that, Frank began to rattle his tongs again. "I ain't takin' any body whar dey don't belong. Mighty quare noises come out'n dat cave, an' it don't bring any luck to inquire into de mystreeous."

"Um-hem!" said Bobs. "I see." She shook her head. "Yes, I see."

"So do I," said Bunny. "It's been — how long did you say, Uncle Frank, since you were there?"

"But, then, I suppose it really is n't very wonderful that he has forgotten where it is! Bushes and trees and things grow so quickly."

That was more than Frank could endure. He dropped the tongs with a clatter, stood up, and pushed his hat to the back of his head. He started to speak, but apparently found no adequate words; so he silently led the way to the boat, and sailed her out toward the source of Cherrypit Creek. Their way led along the low-lying shores, past the peach orchards, which already showed where autumn had touched them. Farther on, a varied growth of scrub-oak and pine came down to the water's edge. At last, Frank steered the boat toward a narrow opening between the trees, where a little creek flowed into the larger one.

"Please, Miss Bobby, please, miss, take de tiller whiles I pull up de centerboa'd and take down sail. We'll have to pole up yonder."

"Exploring the Amazon!" Bunny exclaimed, laughing.

"If it is not exactly tropical," said Bobs, "it is thoroughly spooky."

Whereupon Frank looked at them over his shoulder, and grumbled:—

"It ain't no place for young ladies to come, dat's what it ain't! Ef de cunnel was home, you-all would n't be makin' ol' Frank traipse over de kentry, maybe gettin' into trouble."

As they poled up the creek, the girls felt themselves beginning to share some of Uncle Frank's uneasiness. There was something uncanny about the narrow thread of tide-water inlet, with the dark, dense growth of woods crowding down to the very edge of the water. At times they had to push aside the festoons of wild grape that hung down from the trees and that brushed against the boat. The narrow waterway seemed to lead into the very heart of the woods.

"I don't see," said Bunny, sinking her voice

to a whisper, "how there *can* be a cave where there are no rocks!"

"Perhaps the rocks are farther on," said Bobs; for she, too, could imagine only such caves as she had known among the granite crags of their New England hills.

But Uncle Frank was not communicative; in token thereof his hat was low over his brows. He was suffering from qualms of conscience or from fear — or possibly from both. Steadily he poled the boat upstream between the overhanging shores.

At last Frank shipped his pole and grasped the tree branches that scraped against the boat. There was not room to swing the bow of the craft inshore.

"Set yer foot on dat root, please, miss," said Frank, as he helped Bobs ashore, "Please, Miss Bobby, give Miss Bunny a hand out. I reckon I better lead de way."

A grim determination seemed to have settled upon the old negro. If he was frightened, he would at least fulfill his promise.

"Uncle Frank," Bunny asked, "do you really know where we are?"

Uncle Frank turned. "Miss Bunny," he said, very impressively, "dey ain't a piece of land betwixt de east shore of Montebello an' de next county dat ol' Frank don't know; an' dey ain't a drap of water in dis part of de bay, nor in any of dese yer cricks, dat ol' Frank ain't sailed over!"

His indignation was great, and Bobs shook her head at Bunny in mock reproof.

"Of course Uncle Frank knows where we are," she said. "Why, he even knows whose land this is that we are on, don't you, Uncle Frank?"

Frank did not see the trap. "Yas, miss," he said. "I knows de way to de cave whar Marse William Clayborne hid from Cap'n Cornwallis, an' I knows whose land dis is, an' I knows dat creek we come up, jest as well as I knows dat right over yonder at de aidge of de woods is Wakefield!"

"Wakefield! Where old St. Anne's is?"

"Dey ain't but one Wakefield, an' dat's right over yonder behind dese woods. Ef my dog Jew'l was over dar, you could hyar him barking from whar we's standin'."

"Mercy!" said Bunny, as they went on again. "I thought we must be miles and miles away from everywhere. We could have walked here in half an hour from your house, Uncle Frank!"

"Yas, miss, so we could," said Frank, "but dat li'l' Blue Wing was made to sail in. Ain't any use walkin' when you kin sail."

And still cross and indignant at their doubting him, and with growing distaste for the adventure, the old man led the way; now he parted the undergrowth, here and there lifted a swinging vine, now and again tested a fallen tree trunk or a bit of spongy soil with his foot, yet always, with unfailing instinct or excellent memory, he moved steadily onward. Although it seemed a long way, he went, in fact, only a few hundred yards from the landing-place before he stopped and looked about him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ANCIENT CAVE

THE surface of the peninsula is mostly level; but here and there the land rises into ridges, and drops again into little dells. It was into one of the dells that Frank had led them, a little cup-shaped depression, with a carpet of ferns and a canopy of trees.

"Right over yonder, alongside of dat big white oak, is whar de cave is," said Frank.

The white oak was an enormous tree that towered high above its neighbors; almost among its roots, it seemed, Frank parted the branches of undergrowth and — dropped from view.

Bunny and Bobs stared in speechless amazement at the place where he had vanished; but almost immediately the bushes parted, and his head reappeared.

"I done found it!" he exclaimed.

"I should think so," said Bunny, laughing a little nervously.

Apparently, the suddenness of his discovery had shaken Uncle Frank out of his earlier stolid calm. As he parted the bushes to make a passageway for the girls, he was all smiles, all excitement.

"This is n't a cave," said Bobs; "it's a room — a — a cellar!"

It was very unlike the rocky cave that they had imagined. Was it, indeed, a storeroom or a hiding-place? Had it been made by some of those first comers to the shores of Maryland as a place of refuge from Indians or unfriendly neighbors? That seemed the most likely explanation; for surely generations must have passed since those hand-hewn beams of oak had been set in place, almost under the roots of the great tree. It was a small room, but a dozen people could have hidden there undiscovered.

"But, just the same, I don't see how Cornwallis —" Bobs began, but suddenly stopped.

"Harken to dat!" said Frank, in a frightened whisper.

From somewhere overhead had come a strange sound, as if some one were moaning; at first it was scarcely more than the breath of a cry, but presently it swelled to a horrible wail. It would have been weird enough anywhere; but in the deep twilight of that underground hiding-place it was fairly bloodcurdling.

"What *is* it?" Bunny whispered, getting as close to Bobs as she possibly could. As if in answer to her question, the sound came again, and rose slowly to an agonized shriek.

"Hyah! You stop dat, you stop dat hollerin'!" Frank shouted, with a courage born of fear.

"Oh, look!" cried Bogs, pointing.

They peered into the darkness, and saw two balls of greenish light! Bunny shuddered, and hid her face.

"It's a lion!" she whispered.

But although the sound rose once more in all its horror, Frank laughed.

"No, miss," he said, chuckling with relief, "dat ain't no lion, nor it ain't no ha'nt! Praise be to glory, dat ain't nothin' but a ol' grandpa screech owl!"

Whereupon Frank groped toward the corner whence the two gleaming balls still shone. But he was destined never to reach the owl. With a cry, he stumbled and fell.

"Hi-yi! What's dat? What's dat? Who dat done trip me?"

The girls drew nearer, and having become more accustomed to the dim light, they could make out Frank's form, and could see his hands moving over something on the ground.

"It's a box," said Frank.

"Oh, how perfectly heavenly!" cried Bunny. "Bobs! To think we've lived to see the day when we've really found hidden treasure!"

But Bobs, the fearless, had sunk without a moment's hesitation to her knees, and was also groping round in the darkness.

"A box! It's two boxes — *three* boxes!

Bunny Crawford, as sure as you're living, it *is* treasure. It is, it is! Uncle Frank, we've got to carry these boxes out to the daylight!"

"I ain't gwine to tech dem boxes, miss!" Frank protested. "Buried treasure don't bring no good! Ain't any tellin' how dem boxes come hyar, nor who dey b'longs to, nor what's a-watchin' ober 'em!"

"Well, we've found something, anyway!" said Bobs.

"Yas, miss," said Frank, "and we's gwine to leave it right whar we found it. Who sot dat screech owl over yonder in de corner to watch over it? Huh? Answer me dat!"

"Nonsense!" said Bunny. "Come on, Bobs! I guess we can carry it out between us!"

That was too much for Frank. "No, miss," he said, "ef you-all is sot an' determined to fly in de face of Providence, wid de cunnel way off among de heathen whar he cain't pervent, ol' Frank'll do his best to meet de trouble for you!"

Whereupon he took up a box and bore it out into the light. As he turned his back on the gleaming eyes in the corner, he called out, "You jest tech me, Mr. Screech Owl, ef you darst! I'm a-tellin' you! You jest tech me now!"

Three boxes he carried out of the cave; and, to make sure that no part of the treasure remained, Bobs, ignoring Bunny's warning that there might be "snakes and things," felt round on the floor of the room.

"Not a snake," she said, laughing, as they parted the bushes that covered the opening of the hiding-place, and came out into the sunlight. "Nothing except those three boxes, and this little package that was between two of them. I think it may have fallen out of the pocket of whoever carried the boxes into the cave, without his knowing where it fell."

She held up a small, flat package, about the size of a large envelope. It was wrapped in what seemed to be a waterproof material of black.

"See," she said, "it must have lain there for all these years, safe and dry between two of those boxes!"

CHAPTER XIX

A MIDNIGHT QUEST

ALTHOUGH Mr. John Crockett assumed the expense of repairing old St. Anne's, all of his friends contributed something of ornament or interest to the little church; for among those kindly people, what was undertaken by one was the friendly concern of all. It seemed too bad that the colonel would not get home in time for the rededication of the church; but when the time for leaving Sybil drew near, the old gentleman decided to wait for just one more steamer. The bishop had filled his days with engagements for months ahead; and as no one would dream of reopening the church without the bishop's being present, there was nothing to do except to hold the service on the Sunday first decided upon.

Of course the carpenters hammered away until the very last minute, and of course Bobs and Bunny, Molly Rutherford, and

some of the other girls worked with brooms and dusters and polishing cloths until sunset on Saturday; but at last, when they came down from the chancel to Mr. John and the major, who were waiting for them near the doors, the church was ready for the morrow's service.

"Do you like the way we have arranged the chrysanthemums?" asked Bunny. "Is n't it too bad we have none of the fine old silver you told us about, Uncle John?"

"Ah, yes," Mr. John replied, "it is too bad. The communion service that was the gift of Henrietta Maria, and Queen Anne's flagon—"

"What is a flagon?" Bobs asked.

"A large ewer, or pitcher, that holds the reserve of the communion wine," Mr. John told them. "A pitcher with a lid."

"And yet, John," said Major Rutherford, "valuable though the silver was, the records were the greater treasure. Why," he added, as they all went out of the church, and waited

while Bunny locked the door with a curious iron key as long as a man's hand, "why, those records told of the birth and death and marriage of every man, woman and child in all this part of the country for two hundred years or more. So exactly were they kept that half the families round here never considered it worth while to trouble themselves with any sort of private family record."

"True," said Mr. John. "The loss of the records was a loss to every one of us."

"Were they lost in the war?" one of the young girls asked.

"They disappeared during the war, yes. But how, or when, no one knows."

"Well, the church is here, anyway," said Bobs, as they stepped into the Montebello carriage. "Don't forget — at ten o'clock tomorrow morning!" she called to the others as the carriage started.

When they reached Montebello, they found that the bishop had arrived. Miss Sophia's cheeks were pink, and her hands fluttered

with excitement. She drew Bunny into the depths of the drawing-room for a consultation.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, "I wonder whether Jinny had better leave the hard pillows on the bishop's bed or the soft ones? And do you suppose he would rather have tea than coffee? I should feel quite dreadfully if he were to take coffee just out of politeness, and then sleep badly! And, oh, Abundance, dear, I cannot remember whether he likes smoked herring and the Reverend Mr. Atwater likes salt herring, or whether it is the other way round. And — oh — *would* you wear your hair brooch or the cameo?"

Abundance laughed, and hugged the little lady.

"Oh, Cousin Sophia," she cried, "you *are* such a darling! I'll tell Jinny to leave one hard pillow and one soft one on the bishop's bed; and any one would be willing to stay awake for Sair-Ann's coffee; and we'll have smoked herring, for they are by far the best;

and the cameo, of course — and now I must run and get dressed!"

In spite of Miss Sophia's doubts and fears, the bishop seemed to enjoy his supper and the evening tremendously; certainly he enjoyed the conversation of the younger of his hosts, for he made them sit down on each side of him, and talked with them until long after their usual bedtime.

But although Bunny and Bobs had too much respect for a bishop to show any signs of wanting to run away, they were none the less conscious of a secret uneasiness; for they had made a plan the day before that they meant to carry out that night.

"Hurry!" Bobs whispered, when at last they were alone in their room and the lights were out downstairs. "We have n't a minute to lose."

They had soon changed their afternoon frocks for the rough clothes they wore for tramping; and in less than five minutes they were creeping stealthily down the stairs. The

front door was open, as usual, but they knew that if they went out that way they would run the risk of being seen from some bedroom window. They groped their way along the dark hall and through the pantry. They had every reason to expect the kitchen to be deserted at that hour; but no sooner had the pantry door closed behind them than a quick movement and the fluttering of something white sent them into each other's arms.

"Who dat? Who dat snoopin' into my kitchen dis time of night?"

Sair-Ann had fallen asleep with her head on the kitchen table, but she was not too much startled to face valiantly these shadowy figures. But the Dodo, even in the duskiness of the one dim oil lamp, recognized those he loved best, and made for them with squawks of welcome. The girls giggled.

"There, we caught you, Aunt Sair-Ann!" said Bobs. "We always suspected that you loved the Dodo!"

Sair-Ann rose in indignation. "Whar dat

bird come from?" she demanded. "Hey? Answer me dat!"

Bobs laughed. "He was roosting on the back of your chair, Aunt Sair-Ann! Don't pretend you did n't know it!"

"Dat bird kin fly fru de walls! I shets him out of my kitchen, an' I locks de doors an' winders, an' befo' I know it, hyar he is ag'in! It's my opinion dat bird is *witched!*"

Laughing, the girls started toward the door, but Sair-Ann stopped them. She had reigned over three generations of Crocketts, and she stood in no awe of the twins.

"I wants to know what you child'en are doin' outer your beds at dis time of night! I wants to know how come you-all think you're gwine to traipse round over the kentry wid dat ol' Frank whiles everybody else is in bed whar dey belongs. Jest 'splain dat to me!"

Bunny patted the old woman on the shoulder, and said, "Don't worry about us, Aunt Sair-Ann! Uncle Frank will look after us, and we won't be gone long."

"Uncle Frank ain't gwine to look after nobody to-night, 'cause I done sont Uncle Frank back home whar he belongs. Now, you-all just go 'long upstairs to bed!"

"Oh, but, Aunt Sair-Ann —"

"I ain't gwine to listen to any buts! Neber in all my born days did I see sech child'en! It's Sair-Ann dis an' Sair-Ann dat, an' always a-lookin' and a-huntin' for mischief; an' dis yere bald-headed rooster might be some kin of you-all, from de trouble he is! Now you-all go 'long outen my kitchen, ebery last one of you, an' you ain't gwine out of dis house twell daylight! Go on, now! Go 'long!"

The twins fled, as before their day many another had fled when Sair-Ann opened the floodgates of her speech. When she heard their steps on the floor overhead, the old woman stood in the middle of the kitchen, with arms akimbo, laughing silently.

She shook her turbaned head at the Dodo. "Land! Ain't dem two de beatenest? Come on, you li'l' white imp, let's go ter sleep ag'in!"

The twins laughed, too, when they were safe in their room once more.

"Well," said Bobs, "there's nothing to do except to steal away before any one is up!"

CHAPTER XX

THE GLORIES OF ST. ANNE'S

It was one thing to be enthusiastic when excitement was propping their eyes wide open, and quite another to tumble out of bed in the cool gray dawn after only five or six hours of sleep. They were conscious that they felt a somewhat diminished interest in the scheme that had seemed so alluring to them the day before. Nevertheless, they dressed and crept downstairs; and although the front door was still open, they took their departure through a window; for they were not going to encounter Sair-Ann again if they could help it.

They sped by the stable, and over the fields to the woods toward Uncle Frank's cabin; for without the old boatman's help, they could not carry out their cherished plan.

The woods were full of unaccustomed sounds and shadows, of the quick rush of

wings and the pattering scurry of small feet. In the densest part of the woods another sound reached them — a sound that made them stand still, breathless, frightened; then a familiar voice reassured them.

"Hi-yi!" said Frank, coming toward them with a grin. "Sair-Ann done sont me home last night! She say it was n't any time fo' young ladies to be traipsin' round de kentry! My land! Dat ole woman sho has got a tongue in her haid!"

It was some three hours later that the twins came down to breakfast, dressed in their Sunday best, and wearing an expression of sedateness that should have at once aroused suspicion in those who knew them best; but that morning suspicion had no place at Montebello. The bishop was beaming, Miss Sophia tremulous, and Mr. John a picture of quiet happiness.

The carriage came early, and with the twins leading the way in the dogcart, the three elders drove off in state toward Wakefield. Some

of the friends most interested had arrived before them, and were walking about through the burying ground, or waiting outside the locked door of the church. Beside the gate was a group of smiling negroes, among whom Uncle Frank, in a tall silk hat with a bell crown and a rolling brim, was conspicuous.

When every one had greeted every one else, Mr. John brought out the big old key of the front door.

"This," he said, presenting it to the bishop, "is a symbol, bishop, of the restoration of this old house of worship. Many of your ancestors and mine were baptized here, were married here, and went from here to their last resting places. May those who come after us cherish the old place for the sake of those who are gone. And may there never again be a time when praise and worship are unheard here."

The bishop took the key, and turned it over and over in his hands. He was not ashamed of the tremor in his voice and the mistiness in his eyes as he said:—

"It is not without meaning for all of us, John Crockett, that it is you who restore to our use that which we, through our neglect, had allowed to fall into ruins. To the lessons you have already taught us — lessons of dignity, forbearance, and courage — you add one more — forgiveness!"

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. John, patting the bishop's arm. "Tut, tut, Henry! Unlock the door, and let us see what is within."

Accordingly, the bishop put the key into the lock and turned it. But when he had stepped inside, followed closely by Mr. John and the others, he stopped short.

"What is this?" he exclaimed. "What can this be?"

For on the floor at the foot of the aisle was something that had not been there the night before — something rectangular and dark.

"A box!" the bishop exclaimed. "A box! Three boxes! Bound about with metal — for all the world like my wife's silver chest!"

"By all that is amazing," Major Rutherford

cried, "that is just what they are! John Crockett, where did these come from?"

Some of those who were crowding in the door-way asked, "What is it? What are they?"

But it was plain to every one that Mr. John knew no more about the mysterious chests than the others did. It was only when he and Major Rutherford had stooped over the boxes, and had examined their surfaces and tested their weight, that they began to suspect what they contained.

"John," asked the major, speaking very seriously, "can it be possible that—"

It was little Miss Sophia who was the first to grasp the full meaning of it all.

"Why, brother!" she cried. "Major! Bishop! Those are the church's silver chests! I remember them perfectly! Many a time have I played doll's tea-party with Mary Lee Bateman when those boxes used to be kept in the old rectory, and we were all little children! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The bishop lifted the lid of the first box;

the lock had long since rusted into uselessness, and the box opened easily. Then he lifted out the silver, piece by piece — communion cups and plate, alms basins, a small baptismal shell; from the second box he took four calf-bound volumes, with yellowed pages closely written in that flowing script significant of the leisure of an earlier time.

"The records," said the bishop, in a trembling voice. "See" — he opened the smallest of the volumes — "see the first entry, 'April ye 4th, 1634.' And here," opening another, "the last entry of all, on this half-written page, 'December 4, 1861.'"

But a third box remained to be opened; it was the smallest of all, and proved to be lined with a faded velvet cushion of royal crimson. From the bed where it had lain so long, the bishop lifted the splendid flagon of silver-gilt. and read aloud its inscription: —

To ye Parish of St. Anne in ye Colonye of Maryland given ye 4th day of Novr in ye yeare of Grace 1712 and ye 11th yeare of our reign

ANNE R.

Then, with the flagon in one hand and a volume of the old church register in the other, he turned and said, solemnly:—

"My friends, we have great cause for thanksgiving this day. We know not how these ancient treasures went, or how they returned; but they have been restored to our keeping. Lift up your hearts, and help me lay them on the altar whence they were taken, and let us endeavor hereafter to hold them in greater security."

Whereupon the good man, followed by the other gentlemen, bearing the rest of the restored treasures, walked up to the chancel.

Perhaps the ancient church had never witnessed so impressive a scene; but its solemnity was threatened for one perilous moment. Just as the bishop reached the chancel steps, something white and ruffled emerged from the pulpit with outstretched neck and wildly flapping wings. Bunny and Bobs pounced upon it, and bore it, protesting, from the church. Then the service proceeded, and the twins devoutly

hoped that the Dodo's little adventure had remained unnoticed.

When the last hymn had been sung, and all the assembled congregation had examined and discussed the silver and the volumes that had so mysteriously been restored; and when the Montebello family had partaken of Sair-Ann's good dinner; and when at last the bishop and Mr. John were comfortably settled in armchairs before the library fire, then Miss Sophia asked:—

"Bishop, how do you think those boxes got back into the church?"

"Dear lady, I think they were taken to that church by human hands. I have no doubt whatever on *that* score."

He smiled; and Mr. John, smiling also, asked, "Sophia, did you notice a certain friend of ours come out of the pulpit as we were taking the silver up to the altar?"

The twins started. Miss Sophia looked frightened and distressed.

"Oh, I did so hope that no one noticed that

rooster!" she cried. "I'm sure I don't know why that bird behaves as he does! He is always being found in unexpected places! Why, only last week he flew out of the bonnet box where I keep my very best bonnet. And here to-day — oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

The others were laughing, but Miss Sophia could see nothing humorous about the Dodo.

"You must know, Henry," said Mr. John at last, "that our white rooster is unique; he has ways of his own. But the most remarkable thing about him is that he follows these young ladies of ours wherever they go."

"What! What!" the bishop exclaimed, sitting up straight and looking at the twins.

The girls laughed, and flushed a little.

"We may as well confess," said Bunny, as she went to sit on the arm of Mr. John's chair, and produced the little packet wrapped in black oilcloth that they had found in the cave.

"It all began," she said, "with Uncle Frank's story about a fight between Cornwallis and some men who lived on Kent

Island. It was an awfully exciting story—although, of course, every one knows that General Cornwallis was never in this part of the country at all!"

"Ha!" exclaimed the bishop. "Very interesting, very interesting, indeed! Cornwallis, you say? I have heard of that tradition!"

Then seeing the amazement of the twins and Mr. John's interest, the bishop added: "This Cornwallis was not the Revolutionary general — or the anti-Revolutionary, I should say. He was, so to speak, the Maryland Miles Standish — the captain of the first Marylanders; there was a right good fight between them and the men who had settled on Kent Island. Well, well! But surely that had nothing to do with the finding of St. Anne's treasure?"

"Yes, sir," said Bobs, "it had everything to do with it, because Uncle Frank told us that he knew the very cave where the Kent Islanders had hidden from the pursuit of Cornwallis. We made him take us there."

"To a *cave!*" Mr. John exclaimed.

Bobs nodded. "It was n't really a cave, but a little room dug out of the ground with beams to keep the dirt from tumbling in. Uncle Frank took us to the place; and on the floor, just as if they had been put there yesterday, were the boxes. In between the second and third, as if it had dropped out of some one's pocket, was — this!"

Bunny laid the little packet in Mr. John's hands, and as he unfolded the cover, they all bent closer to see.

Two letters; a yellowed, folded paper that contained a long dark tress of hair and a shorter golden one — a baby's curl; a small photograph — these were the things that the packet contained.

The envelopes had been removed from the two letters. Mr. John unfolded the sheets. Both were dated, but there was no clue to the place from which they had been sent. Both began, "Dear Husband." One was signed, "Your loving Martha," and the other, "Your

devoted wife." At the end of one there were some penciled scrawls — some of those childish, formless scribblings that carry their message to a father's heart as plainly as words of well-formed letters. The little packet contained only one clue to its owner. On the back of the photograph was the name "Martha Grayson," and the date, "May, 1861."

"The month after Sumter fell. This must have been taken for her soldier husband," said the bishop.

"Then the man who took the church silver," said Bobs, "must have been a soldier! *Oh!*"

"But if he had been a Southern soldier," said Bunny, "would he have robbed St. Anne's? And if he was a Northern soldier, what was he doing here where there was no fighting?"

Mr. John patted her hand, and laughed. "You are quite a detective, my dear," he said. "But is n't it possible that whoever hid our boxes may have done so from worthy motives?"

"Ha!" said the bishop. "I think you know more than you are telling us, John!"

Mr. John smiled. "Well, Henry, if I do, it is an old tale, and not worth the telling."

And although the twins tried all their arts of persuasion on Mr. John, he shook his head; and the tale remained for the time untold.

CHAPTER XXI

EIGHTEEN

It was good to be at home again in South Wickham, good to sit cozily round the table in the early lamplight, good to be back at school for the final year, and to be once more part of the familiar life of the village.

The colonel had arrived at Montebello in October, with a great deal to say about the discomforts of India, and a great deal of grumbling to do about people who would persist in remaining there on the trivial business of building bridges, when they might be safe at home at Montebello leading the pleasant, easy-going lives that had been good enough for their grandfathers.

"I'm afraid," said Bobs, describing the old gentleman's state of mind to Dr. Crawford, "I'm afraid that grandfather does not possess the modern point of view."

The doctor laughed and pinched her cheek.

"While you are criticizing your elders, young lady," he said, "kindly remember that a good deal that's worthy of observation may be lying quite beyond your 'modern point of view!'"

Yet, for all his teasing, the doctor was aware that the girls' summer, with its responsibilities and experiences, had done much for them. He was aware of a new gentleness and thoughtfulness in Bobs, and a finer, more dignified poise in Abundance.

"They are growing up," Mrs. Crawford said.

"Yes," he replied, "but there is something more. I have always wanted my girls to do more than just 'grow up.' I want them to develop mentally and spiritually, as well as physically. I do not want my girls to feel that they are the center of their little universe; I want them to realize something of what is in the lives of others. I am not even afraid of their knowing something of sorrow and disappointment, if it will give them a fuller, wider sympathy and a finer balance."

• EIGHTEEN •

The doctor was right; the summer had changed the twins. Roberta was as merry as before; she had come back from Montebello more careful of the unspoken demands of others, more thoughtful in many little ways. She would always be Bobs the merry, Bobs the audacious, Bobs the impulsive; but she would also be Bobs of the helping hand.

Although Roberta was unconsciously charming, Abundance, with her dimples and her curls, was rather the prettier of the two. To quote Colonel Crockett, who pretended to despise feminine resources, although he secretly adored them, she was becoming adjusted to "folderols." But her greatest charm lay in her happy faculty of pleasing — of saying the right word, of remembering to do little acts of kindness that others did not think of.

The twins' birthday was on February 14. When they were little, the two had rejoiced in the belief that the universal celebration of the day was, somehow, in their honor. To them birthday and St. Valentine's Day were

synonymous, and it was a long time before they could understand why Sybil and Dick, Don and Hallam did not also receive and send lace-trimmed souvenirs when their birthdays arrived.

On the St. Valentine's Day after their visit to Montebello, the twins became eighteen years old, and their birthday was well celebrated indeed. A box from India arrived a week ahead of time, and the girls had all the pleasure of anticipation, of guessing what was in it, besides their actual pleasure when at last they opened it, and found such curious bangles of silver, such lovely scarfs of silk, and, from Donald, such dainty ivory fans. Any one would have known that it was the colonel who packed the box from Montebello, with the inevitable ham on top, and gifts from every man, woman and child on the plantation.

But the crowning surprise came in the evening, when the crowd of young people had assembled. Hallam had made several trips to the station during the day; he had gone about

with a grin on his face that warned the twins that mischief was brewing; but long experience had taught them to let sleeping dogs lie, and they pretended to be wholly unaware of Hallam's expression.

Dressed in the new gowns that had been their mother's gifts, the twins had welcomed all their guests. A momentary lull had fallen on the room, when Hallam suddenly opened the door.

"A gentleman to see you," he said, with suspicious innocence.

Bunny and Bobs looked at each other. A gentleman! Heavens! Was it some one they had not invited?

"Shall I bring him in here?" asked Hallam, with a look that suggested his perfect willingness to do anything to be accommodating.

"Why, I suppose so," said Bobs, miserably aware of the silence and the expectant looks of the guests.

"Of course," Bunny said, and tried to smile.

Hallam's face flushed alarmingly, and,

with a sound between a choke and a laugh, he disappeared.

"This way, please," they heard him say a moment later in the hall; and into the room, with imperturbable dignity in spite of his bald head, stalked — the Dodo!

He stood still for a moment, bewildered by the lights; then, as he caught sight of the one he loved best in the world, he made for Bunny, with his own peculiar gait, his outstretched neck and flapping wings, and his squawks of triumph.

Remembering her new gown, Bunny fled precipitately. But in and out among the crowd the Dodo followed. Nothing could bar his way; he paid no attention to the shouts of laughter or the strange hands that tried to stop him. Only when Bunny sank upon a sofa, helpless with laughter, only when he could perch on the back of the couch behind her, only then was that bald-headed rooster satisfied.

"It was perfectly horrid of you," Bunny

wrote to Dr. Jack, "to think of sending that wretched bird. For of course we know you were responsible for it, though neither Hallam nor Molly nor any one at Montebello will give you away. It *was* perfectly horrid of you; but, anyway, you gave pleasure to the Dodo, for he was the belle of the ball."

CHAPTER XXII

MR. JOHN COMES SEEKING SOME ONE

THE winter passed. One day in April, when the girls came home from school, they were surprised and delighted to be greeted by Mr. John.

"I thought it was about time for me to see something of the world," said the gentle old man, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Bunny was rubbing her cheek against his right sleeve and Bobs was clasping his other arm with both her hands. Mr. John was beaming with happiness.

"Oh," cried Bobs, "seeing the world, indeed! You came to see *us*, you know you did!"

Bunny laughed. "I wonder that Grandfather let you come by yourself."

"Well," said Mr. John, "he knew I was coming to safe hands, you see."

But that evening, after supper, Mr. John disclosed his real reason for coming North.

"Robert," he asked, "is there any one among your patients by the name of Grayson?"

The twins looked up quickly. "Why," Bob exclaimed, "that was the name on the little photograph we found in the cave!"

"Grayson?" said the doctor, slowly. "Grayson! No—" He was evidently trying to recall something to his mind. "I don't seem to remember any one of that name."

But Mrs. Crawford dropped her work, and exclaimed, "Why, Robert! That was the name of the minister that the people over in Greenwood were so devoted to! Pastor Grayson? I've heard that name all my life!"

"That's it!" the doctor exclaimed. "I knew I had heard it somewhere!"

Mr. John was leaning forward with a look of pleased interest on his face. "And is he still living?" he asked.

"I don't know," Mrs. Crawford replied. "I haven't been in Greenwood for years. But it would be an easy matter to find out."

The twins could be restrained no longer. "Oh, *please* tell us what you're thinking about!" cried Bunny.

Mr. John smiled, and drew from his pocket the little package that the girls had found between the boxes in the cave. He laid it in Dr. Crawford's hands.

"You will be interested in these letters, Robert," he said. "You know the story—how these girls of yours, in their quest of romance, happened to find the silver and the old records that had been lost so many years. You know, also, that the little packet you hold in your hands was lying between two of the boxes, apparently just where it had fallen from the pocket of the person who had hidden them in the old retreat. You know how their finding of the treasure coincided so happily with the rededication of the church, and what a fine surprise these young scamps gave us."

"Oh, yes, Uncle John," Bobs cried, "Daddy *does* know all that! Please, please, *please* tell us what we don't already know!"

"Roberta!" Mrs. Crawford protested; but she did not realize the full measure of understanding and sympathy that existed between Mr. John and the twins.

The old gentleman shook his finger at Bobs, and said, "Don't try to drive an old horse at a new pace, young lady! When we read the letters and looked at that faded photograph with the name of Martha Grayson on its back, I recalled an incident that I had long forgotten. It did not come back to me all at once, for it happened long years ago, and since then many things have occurred of a kind to make me forget.

"But gradually, bit by bit, there has come back to me the memory of a stormy night in '63. I was at Montebello, kept there by an unfortunate promise to my mother. All of the negroes except our faithful Daniel, his brother Japhet, and Sair-Ann, had left the place — gone off, poor souls, to find out what freedom was like. The county reëchoed with rumors. The armies were coming, so people

said, to drench our fields with blood and to devastate our homes. Now and again small companies of men in gray galloped along the road; and that was as near as the war ever came to us. But we did not dream of our actual security, and people tied their horses and cattle out in the woods and buried what remained of their silver and valuables.

"That was the state of affairs when, one night, Daniel came to me and whispered that some one was hiding in the brown house. That was the place where I afterward lived, but at the time of the war it was unoccupied. The negroes were always coming to us with one tale or another, but this time Daniel was so insistent that I took a lantern and went off to see who or what was in the house.

"Daniel was right. There was some one there, and I spent a very pleasant hour or two talking with a gentleman whose name I recall as Gray or Graves, or something like that; it might even have been Grayson. He was a gentleman, well read and of agreeable

and courteous manners, and it was a curious succession of incidents that had driven him to find shelter in the little house on the border of Montebello. He was a chaplain with the Seventh Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, who were then in Virginia. Word had come to him that his wife was ill, possibly dying; he had obtained his leave of absence, and had started for his home by what he believed to be the most direct way — only to find himself in the midst of outposts and scouting parties of Confederates. Should he be captured by any of those, it might well be that he would never again see his wife, especially as he was not in uniform.

"That was his story; and after I had procured some food for him, I advised him to pass the rest of the night in Wakefield church, and told him how to find his way North."

"Oh!" cried Bobs; and Bunny exclaimed, "So *that* is it!"

Mr. John laughed and shook his head. "I don't know. There is no way of being sure;

but I remember that the gentleman expressed a conviction that our part of the country would certainly be the scene of fighting."

"That is exceedingly interesting," Dr. Crawford declared. "Your theory, as I understand it, is that this wandering chaplain discovered the records and silver in the church, believed them in danger, and hid them. Is that it?"

Mr. John nodded, and the doctor went on: "Then I think the girls had better take you to Greenwood on Saturday, and let you see what you can learn about the Reverend Doctor Grayson who was minister there. These monkeys of ours deal in coincidences, you know. It would not surprise me if your chaplain should be standing on the parsonage steps waiting for you."

CHAPTER XXIII

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

ACCORDINGLY, on the following Saturday morning, the twins and Mr. John took a train for Greenwood, which was only two or three stations beyond South Wickham. Mrs. Crawford went with them; it made a pleasant excuse for seeing some of her old friends again.

Of course every one remembered dear Dr. Grayson. And he had indeed been chaplain of the regiment during the war.

One old lady remembered that his young wife, who had been Martha Pettigrew from Meath, had died while her husband was with the army; and that a woman named Mrs. William Wells had taken little Harry Grayson into her house, although she had seven children of her own.

And was Dr. Grayson dead? Of course not! He was too old to preach now, to be sure; but

he lived with his grandson, Harvey Grayson, on a farm near Wisdom. Harvey was turning the farm upside down with new-fangled notions he had brought back from the agricultural college that he had attended.

Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Crawford's friend, said that Mr. Crockett and the girls could easily drive there in the afternoon, and offered them the use of her horse and buggy and her saddle horse. She went off to get a riding skirt for Bobs, who had chosen to ride the horse.

Mrs. Hill's riding horse was not exactly of a class with the Montebello Arabians. It was a peaceful, ambling creature with two gaits, — a walk and a trot, — and it responded to Bob's efforts at guiding it by merely turning its head. But, after all, a horse was a horse to Bobs, and any horse was better than none.

The way led by a winding road out of the village, over the meadows that had been farmed for two centuries, across a covered bridge, and up the mountain-side, lovely now in the budding freshness of spring.

At the end of an hour's journey they might almost have thought themselves in some undiscovered country, so few were the signs of human habitation. Only the smoke from a hidden train, and some inquisitive cattle that poked their heads over the stone fences, showed that it was not a wilderness. From time to time Bobs succeeded in persuading her horse to leave the main road and explore for a little way one of those grass-grown bypaths that in the New England hills give evidence of the denser population of bygone years.

"Don't get lost!" Mr. John called out.

"No fear!" said Bobs. "This nag could find its way back to its own barn from Jericho. If you miss me, don't be worried, but go right on to the Grayson farm. I'll either follow you, or let the horse take me back to Greenwood."

Neither Bunny nor Mr. John could imagine that any accident could befall Bobs on horseback; so they drove serenely on toward the Grayson farm, and thought nothing of the fact that Bobs was not following them.

Surely there is nothing more alluring than the woods in spring, where anemones quiver on the borders of tinkling brooks, where Jack-in-the-pulpits are getting ready to preach their annual sermons, where a pearl-hued haze blows among the tree trunks like the breath of fairies. It was the first time that year that Bobs had been out in the woods; so, in spite of the reluctance of her horse to leave the beaten highway, she threaded her way in and out among the trees.

Just beyond a clump of white birches the haze seemed more dense; who could tell what nodding treasures of spring bloom it might be veiling? So on and on she rode. Now it was time to turn back. The haze had grown still thicker, and still more dense, more pungent. The horse was uneasy, and nervously lifted its head to the wind; it jumped at every crack of a twig and quiver of a dried leaf.

Bobs seemed to catch some of the horse's nervousness; peering about her, she saw that the haze was increasing; and the odor — was

it not like the all-pervading autumn scent of burning leaves — a scent not unpleasing, yet somewhat sinister, too?

Haze? This was not haze, but smoke! It was *smoke* that was frightening the horse! Smoke!

Bobs gave the creature a sharp slap on its flank, but instead of starting forward, it dropped its head and quivered.

She was not afraid, but she was keenly aware of her danger. More than once within her memory the men and boys of the village had hastened out to fight a fire that threatened the wooded slopes up beyond the pastures. There was many a blackened, telltale spot even within sight of the doctor's windows.

She jumped from the saddle. She had entered the woods from the west; she turned toward what seemed to be the north; then, by coaxing and patting and pulling on its bridle, she drew the horse after her.

It was slow work. If it had not been for the horse, she could have run; but she could not

leave the miserable, frightened beast. Her eyes were beginning to sting. There was a sob in her throat — a sob that she must at all costs keep down, lest her courage should escape with it. And everywhere, the smoke grew thicker and more blinding, more choking, more bewildering!

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE'S FIRE

THE smoke, stealing steadily up from the lowlands, spread through the woods. Through the midst of it, Bobs tried to fight her way to safety. The smoke choked her, set her heart to beating wildly, and stung her eyes. At the end of the bridle reins the horse held back persistently, but she dragged him along and urged him on by rein and pleading word.

It was a miserable predicament. She was wondering with all her heart and mind how she could get out of it; presently she began to wonder what people would say when she did not return.

"They always say good things of you after you are gone," she told herself.

Then she wished that there were some way of letting them know that she would like Molly Rutherford to have her gold bracelet. And she regretted that she had not more often

remembered the things her mother had told her, and that she had not given in to Bunny now and again. They would miss her — she had no doubt of that; but she was certainly pathetically young to —

That thought was too much for her! She was not going to submit tamely to perishing in this fire. With this stupid horse holding back at every step, she would never escape without help. Although it was almost impossible that any one should hear her, with all the strength of her young voice, with all the strength born of fear and desperation, she shouted: —

"Hoo-hoo-oo-oo!"

She listened; again she shouted. This time — was that an answering shout?

"Hoo-hoo-oo-ooo!" Once more she called; and now there was no doubt that she heard an answering cry.

"Where a-a-are you?" some one shouted in the distance.

She called again, and then waited where she was, choking and gasping, but with a feel-

ing of relief and joy surging through her. Presently she heard some one come crashing through the woods, and in another moment a young man emerged from the smoke; he was young and tall; his coat was torn by his dash through the branches; his hair was tousled, and his laughing face bore a scratch or two.

"I say," he cried, "you've given us all a good old scare! I'm Harvey Grayson. Your sister and Mr. Crockett came up to the farm, and said you would be along in a minute or two. Then we saw the smoke, and you did n't come — and, I say, you *did* shake us up a bit!"

It was a thoroughly frightened and rather penitent Bobs whom Harvey led to safety and on to his own house.

There two old men had just finished putting together, bit by bit, a curious story; for Mr. John had found the man whom he helped on his way that stormy night in the winter of '63. But because Bobs was pale and tired after her unhappy experience in the woods, the details

of the story remained for a while untold. Bobs wanted her mother; if the truth were told, she wanted to snuggle up in some comfortable corner away from every one and have a good cry. She had been very glad that she could show to her rescuer's admiring eyes a courageous face unmarked by tears; but no one could go on being courageous forever!

Harvey Grayson took them back to Greenwood in the small automobile that he called his "maid of all work." They whirled over the roads, through the region of smoke, across the lower valley, in a fraction of the time it had taken them to traverse it with horses. On the way they passed several parties of men going out to fight the fire.

"It will not be a big one," young Mr. Grayson assured them. "There is no wind, and the Weather Bureau reports rain for to-night. Easy enough to hold the fire in check until then, even if they do not get it out at once. In a few years we shall know how to prevent such waste altogether."

But the shock and strain had its effect upon Bobs. When she got home her father put her to bed, and for a month she was under his professional care.

"We shall have to let Abundance carry off the scholastic honors of the family," said the doctor, when for three or four weeks Bobs had grown more and more pale.

"Oh, Daddy!" she had protested. "Don't keep me out of school when I have only a few more weeks! Why, I am president of my class —"

"And my patient," said the doctor firmly.

So, apparently, Bobs was to have one more thrilling experience — that of being the family invalid.

"You just ought to try it yourself," she said one day to Harvey Grayson.

That young man had suddenly formed a habit of coming almost daily in his "maid of all work" to South Wickham; he smilingly ignored all questions about what was happening to his crops at home, and whether he had

discovered a natural well of gasoline on his place.

"You just ought to try it yourself," said Bobs. "You have no idea how popular you are until you get on the sick list."

"Is n't there any other way of finding out how much people like you? Because I should very much like to know —"

"Oh, don't be silly!" said Bobs scornfully, answering his words and look with as much encouragement as he had yet been able to get.

CHAPTER XXV

MEMORIES

BUT it was quite true that what Bobs had been pleased to call her popularity was being impressed upon her; its final conclusive evidence came in a telegram from the colonel, announcing that he would arrive in South Wickham on one of the last days of May, "to help brother John take care of that monkey."

"Just the thing!" Dr. Crawford declared. "We'll show South Wickham such a Memorial Day celebration as it has never seen!"

And true to his words, the good doctor roused the enthusiasm of the town so effectively that the morning of May 30 found the village band practicing on the Common, the school children assembling, dressed in white and carrying baskets of lilacs and other blossoms, a line of vehicles already hitched along

the church hitching rail and in the sheds behind the town hall, and — for the day was supremely theirs — a little group of white-haired men in blue uniforms, with small cotton flags in their hands. The center of the group was their chaplain, the Reverend Doctor Grayson. When the men had all exchanged greetings, they started off toward the doctor's house — with the measured step of fifty years ago; and if it lacked something of its former spring and quickness, their hearts lacked nothing of their earlier enthusiasm.

The doctor and his guests awaited them on the piazza; and when the men in blue had shaken hands with the two Southerners, Dr. Crawford announced that Mr. John Crockett had something to say.

So Mr. John, with his shy little smile, told how he had met their chaplain during those troubled times of '63. With simple, earnest words, he made them see the stormy night, the little house in the woods, the scouting parties of riders in gray, the church in

DR. CRAWFORD ANNOUNCED THAT MR. JOHN CROCKETT HAD SOMETHING TO SAY

its neglected churchyard amid the deserted homes of an earlier generation.

And when he had finished, Dr. Grayson took up the tale, and spoke not only to the old soldiers, but to the company of younger people who were listening breathlessly to this curious story of a time that was old before they were born.

The colonel, wearing a uniform that had never been seen in South Wickham before, stood within the doorway, as if he felt himself something of an alien, even to-day; he was frowning ferociously — that frown which with him was always a signal of emotion. Mrs. Crawford stood with her arm through the colonel's; and it was a rarely striking group that they looked upon.

The white-haired men in blue sat in the large armchairs or along the piazza railing; a dozen younger men and girls stood on the steps or leaned against the pillars; a few little children in white looked up with serious eyes of wonder — those eyes of a child who listens

to a tale of ancient heroes; and, facing them all, side by side as friends, stood John Crockett and the chaplain.

"I had been four days and four nights on the way," the chaplain said, "hiding in ditches and hayricks, threading my way between outposts and scouting parties. I had crossed the Potomac in a fishing vessel, and was trying to work my way to Annapolis or Washington or Baltimore. But it was one thing for a man to get a leave of absence and start for home, and quite another for him to reach his destination. I well remember the night when I sought shelter in a deserted cottage off the main road. I remember that when a man with a lantern came up to the place, I prepared to surrender myself, for I had been without food for some time, and was unable to go on. But I had found a friend. He brought me food, and directed me to a safer hiding-place, where I might lie hidden until the scouting parties should have passed on.

"Mr. Crockett has told you about the

church. I believe these young ladies could tell you more; but that must wait until another time. I remember that I found it rarely interesting. I found in the vestry-room cases of silver that had been the gift of Charles and his queen, and one splendid flagon, inscribed as having been the gift of Queen Anne. Next morning I looked over the old church registers, and soon I became completely absorbed in births and marriages and deaths, which had been faithfully kept since the earliest days of the colony.

"My reading was disturbed by the pounding of hoofs on the road outside, and I took refuge in a space under the pulpit. But the passing of the soldiers set me thinking. Mr. Crockett had told me that the church had long been without a rector, and that services were seldom held there; he had even remarked that the properties of the church should, perhaps, be taken to a place of safety until the war should be over. When I expressed wonder at their having been left at any time in

a building so seldom used, Mr. Crockett had replied, with smiling assurance, that thefts were unknown thereabouts.

"Nevertheless, when I had inspected those records and treasures, I realized their great value, and I felt it my duty somehow to place them in security. I felt that as a clergyman of the church and something of an antiquarian, I had most providentially been sent there. Yet what to do with those rare treasures I knew not.

"Later in the day a second party of soldiers came along, and entered the church to rest. From my hiding-place I could hear their talk of impending fighting, and I well knew by that time that war brings fire and looting in its wake. Beyond a doubt those boxes must be put in a place of safety.

"When I was in hiding, I found that the negroes, in some mysterious fashion, always became aware of my presence. So it was at that time. An old colored man, white-haired and bent, came to the church that night with

an offering of corn bread — a mighty welcome offering it was, too.

"'Is you a friend of Marse Abr'am Lincum?' he asked.

"'No,' I told him, 'not a personal friend; but I am on his side.'

"'Well, marster,' said the old man, 'I reckon you can't help being jest a plain Yankee, no more 'n I kin help being a plain nigger. But I sure does hope before I die to set eyes on *some*body what have seen Marse Abr'am Lincum!'

"I talked with that old darky for quite a while, and told him all that I had ever heard of Lincoln. At last I confided to him my fears for the church's valuables, and asked whether he did not know of some safe hiding-place. He thought for a moment; then, drawing me to the church door, he pointed across the moonlit fields to where a great oak tree towered above its fellows.

"'Right over yonder, marster,' he said, 'is a li'l' room dug outen de ground whar folks

used to hide in time of trouble. I reckon dey ain't nobody alive, 'ceptin' me an' my li'l' grandson Frankie, what knows about dat li'l' room; and I 's got one foot in de grave, and Frankie 'll be too scared to tell.'

"Accordingly, with the old man's help, I carried those three boxes to a place of safety, and before morning went on my way.

" I meant to go back, some day, and restore the treasures to the church people of that neighborhood; but when I got away I realized that I did not know in what part of the country the church was. It would have meant a long and expensive search, and times were very hard. Besides, over there in Greenwood, I had a little motherless boy, and the cares of a parish. So the years passed; and you all know, friends and comrades, how quickly they pass when our heads are white.

"Yet when Mr. Crockett, a month or so ago, brought me the little packet of letters and locks of hair, and a faded photograph of my young bride, — the same little packet that

had dropped from my pocket on the night I hid the church treasures, — why, it all came back to me so that it seemed like only yesterday!

"Only yesterday! And yet so many healing hours and days and years have mercifully passed since then that the bitterness is gone, the old wounds are all but forgotten, and we who were enemies are brothers."

The chaplain was all unaware of the tears that were streaming down his cheeks; and the colonel, as if irresistibly drawn forward, had come from the doorway and was standing by his side. As the tale ended, he laid his hand on the chaplain's shoulder. For a full minute no one spoke.

Then the colonel drew from its sheath at his side a sword. He held it on his open palms and looked into the faces of those old men in blue.

"Marse Robert's sword," he said, clearing his throat. "He gave it to me after Bull Run — "

Every veteran there rose to his feet and took off his hat. They crowded forward, in or-

der to see better the sword that Lee had worn. One or two laid their hands upon the blade.

"I was wounded at Gettysburg," said one presently.

"I fought at Chancellorsville," another said.

A third drew a folded yellow paper from his breast pocket. "This," he said, "is a letter signed by Abraham Lincoln."

Only for an instant did the colonel hesitate; then he passed his sword to one of the veterans, took off his own hat, and held out his hand for the letter. He opened and read it; and as he returned it to the man whose pride and treasure it was, he said, in a voice that shook:

"If he had only lived! If he — had only — *lived!*"

It was Mr. John who broke the tension of the scene.

"Let us pay tribute to our dead," he said, passing one arm through the colonel's and the other through Chaplain Grayson's.

But it was the colonel who spoke the final word. "Yes," he said, "our dead. *Ours!*"

And so arm in arm they led the way, those three old men — one still proudly wearing the gray, one in memorial blue, and one who had not fought, but who, perhaps, had suffered most of all.

Along the village street they marched, with the little company of veterans following behind them. In the rear came the young men and girls, and the little flower-laden children, and the village people, who had set aside their habitual tasks, in order to pay respect to the dead who had made possible the happy life of to-day. Along the village street, past the Common, and up the hill to the quiet place of graves — on and up they marched.

"There seems to be a good deal more in life than you 'd think," said Bobs, with a whimsical little smile.

They were the last to come down the hill, she and Harvey Grayson, whose eyes had rested upon her all the morning. He had thought her very beautiful when her cheeks

had been wet with tears, which that earlier danger from the fire had not been able to set there.

Dr. Jack Rutherford, hearing of the unusual events that were to mark this Memorial Day, and having, perhaps, other reasons of his own, had come on a flying visit to South Wickham; Bunny had taken him off for a climb, so that he might view her valley from the mountain; yet, for once, Bobs did not miss her twin. She was not even aware of the pause that preceded her companion's reply.

"Yes," he said, at last, "there does seem to be a good deal in life. Things men have fought for, things men have died for, things — more's the pity! — that women have wept for. But there's work and play, and — something else, is n't there, Bobs?"

But Bobs was not yet ready to answer that question. "Don't be silly!" she said.

And with that answer Harvey Grayson had to be satisfied for a while.

THE END

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